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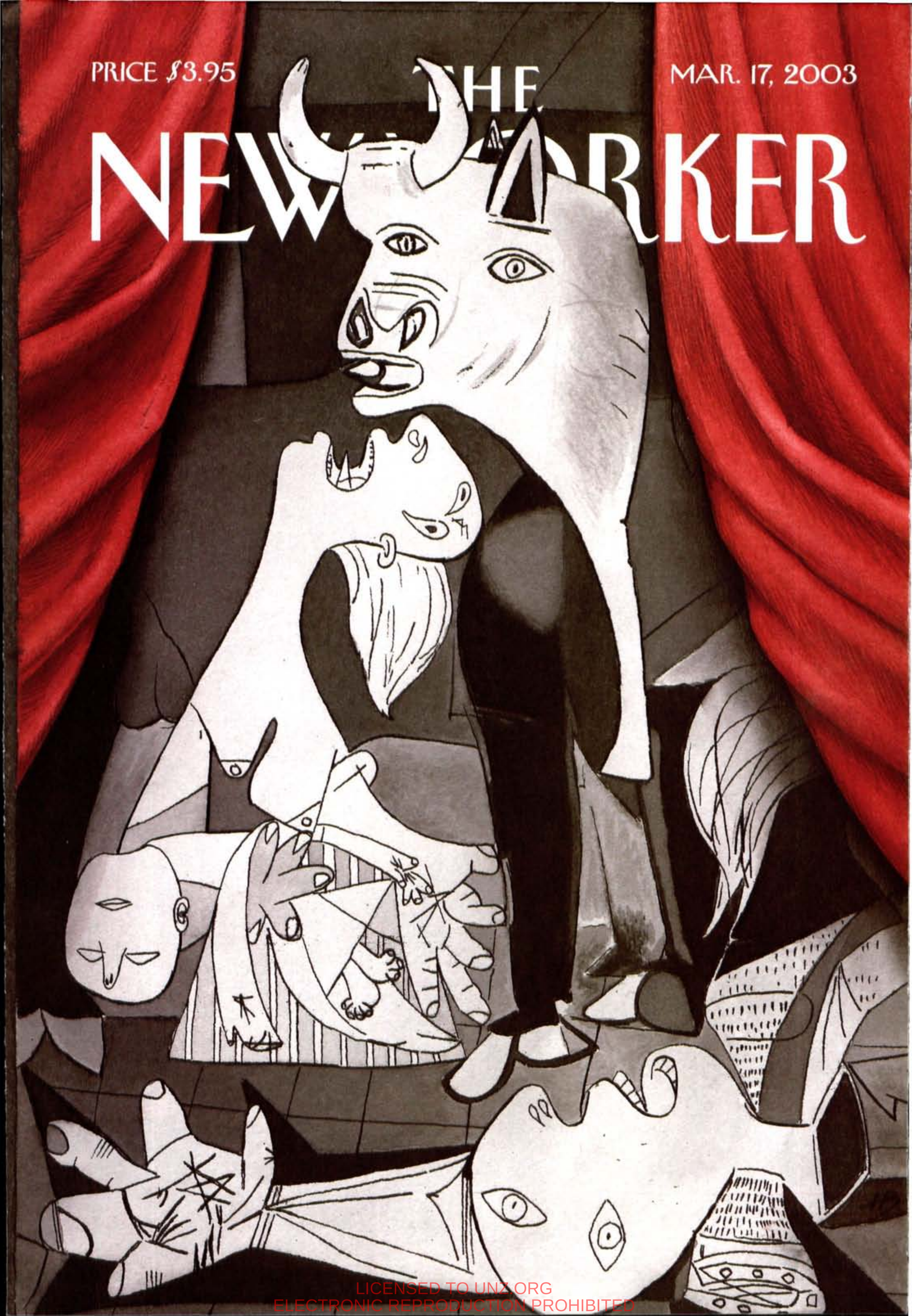

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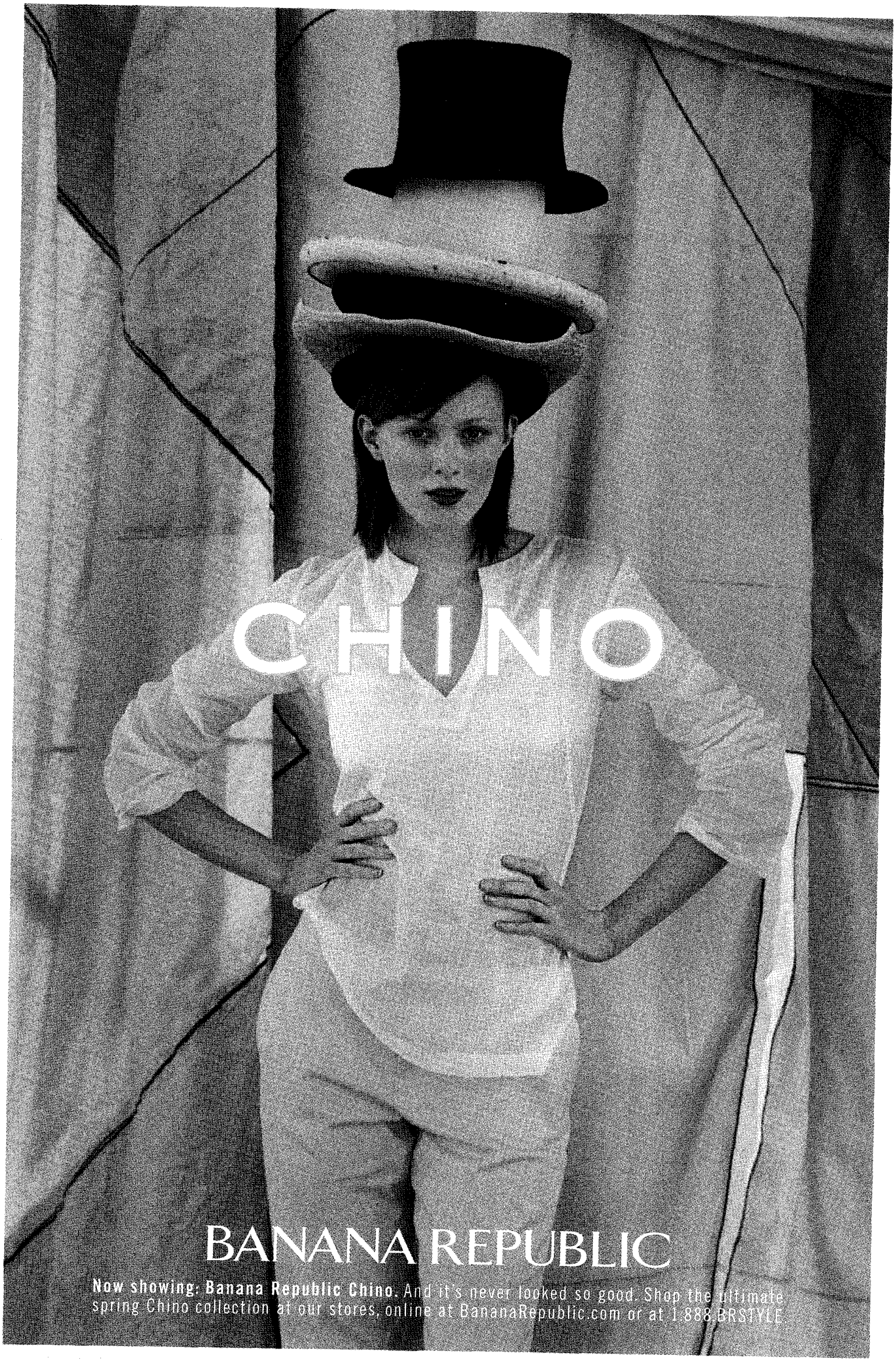
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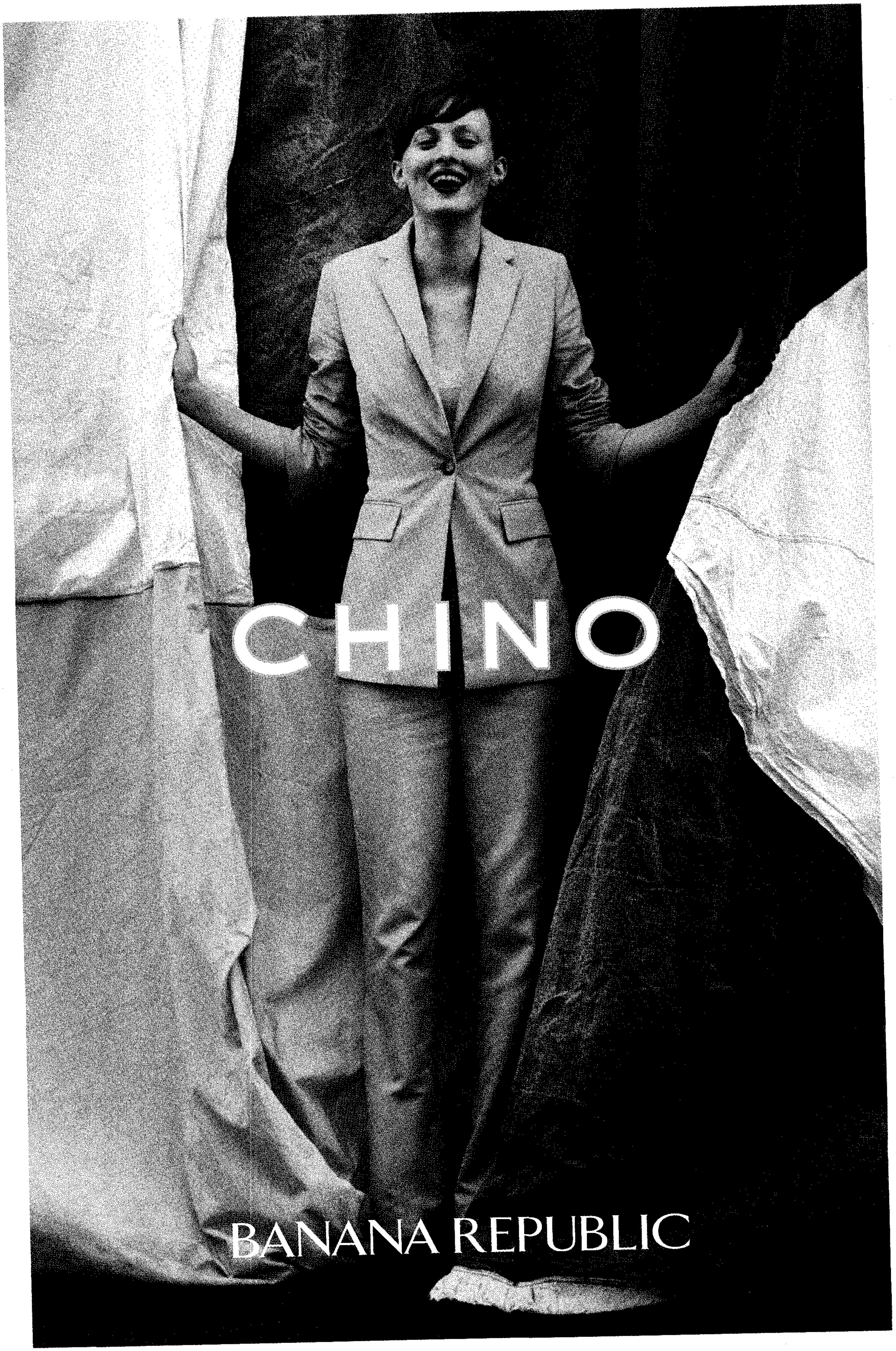
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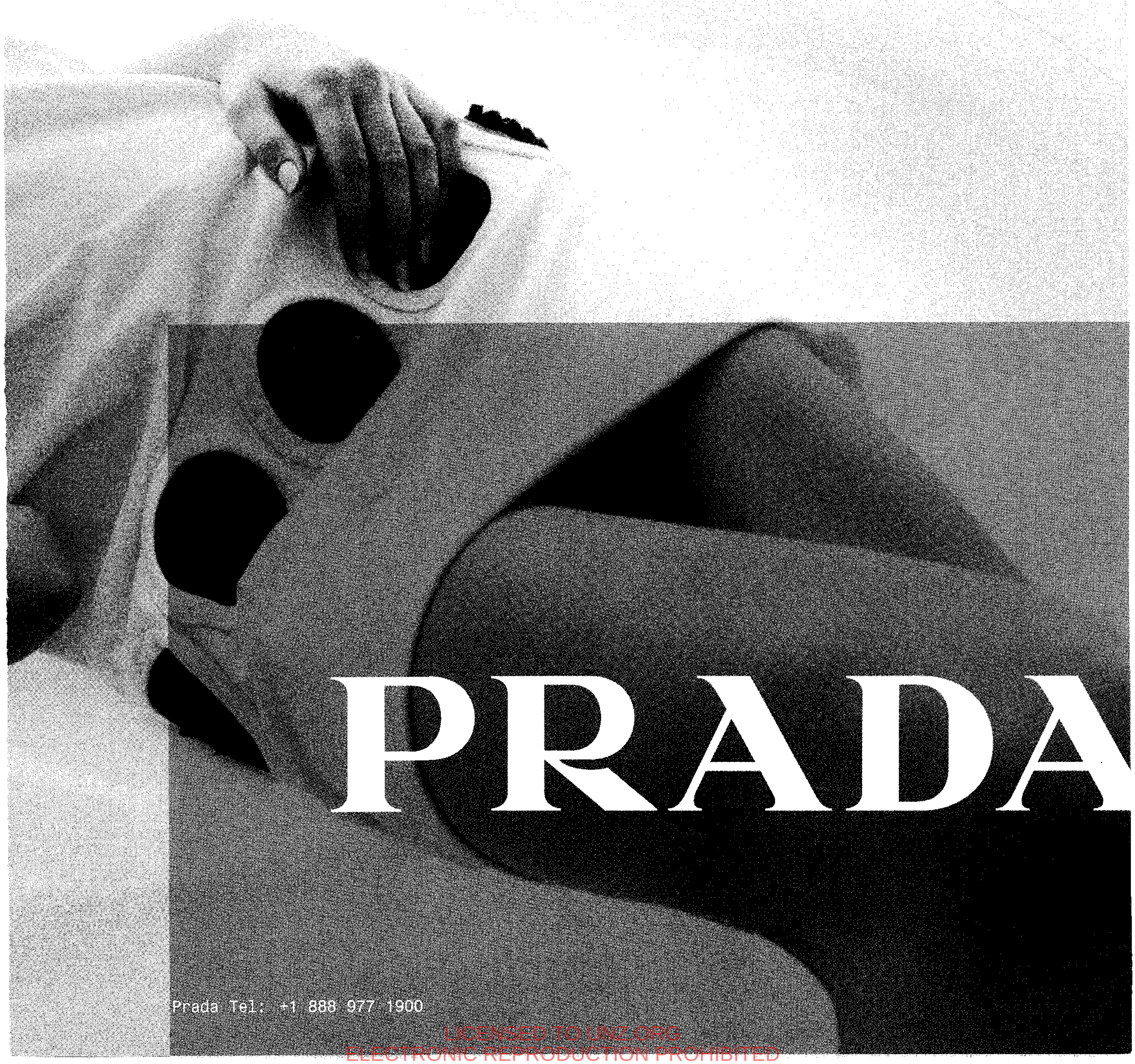

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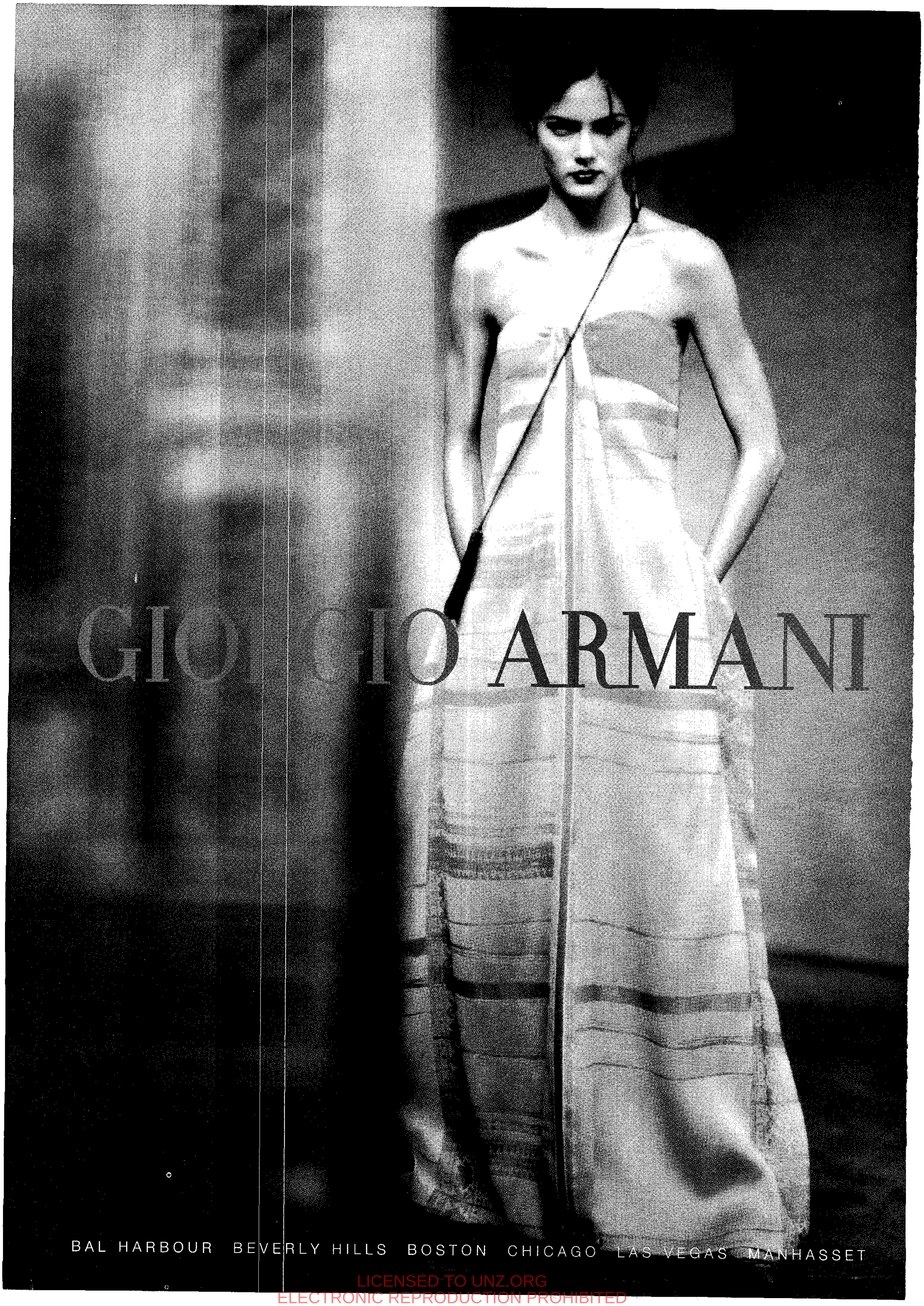
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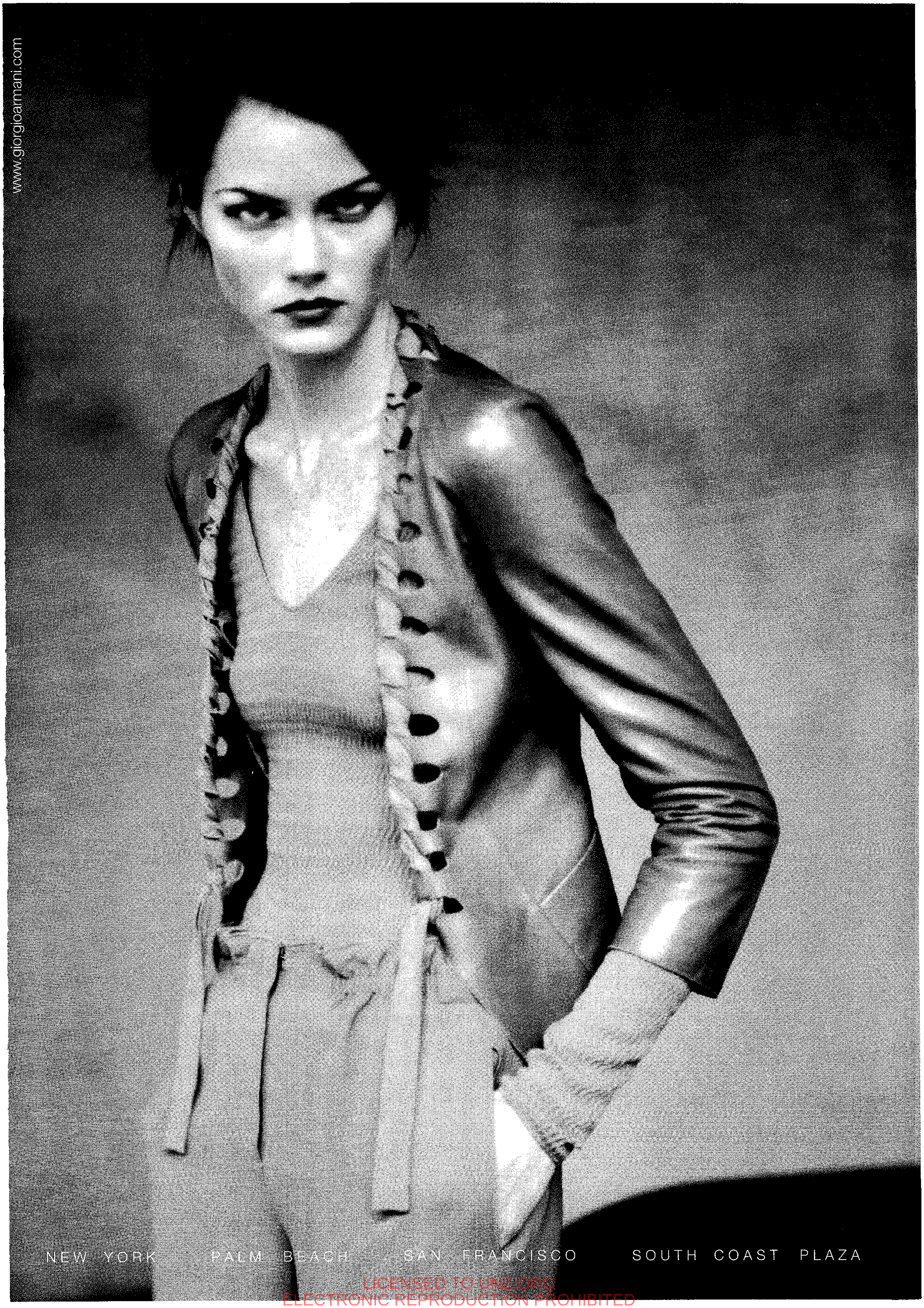
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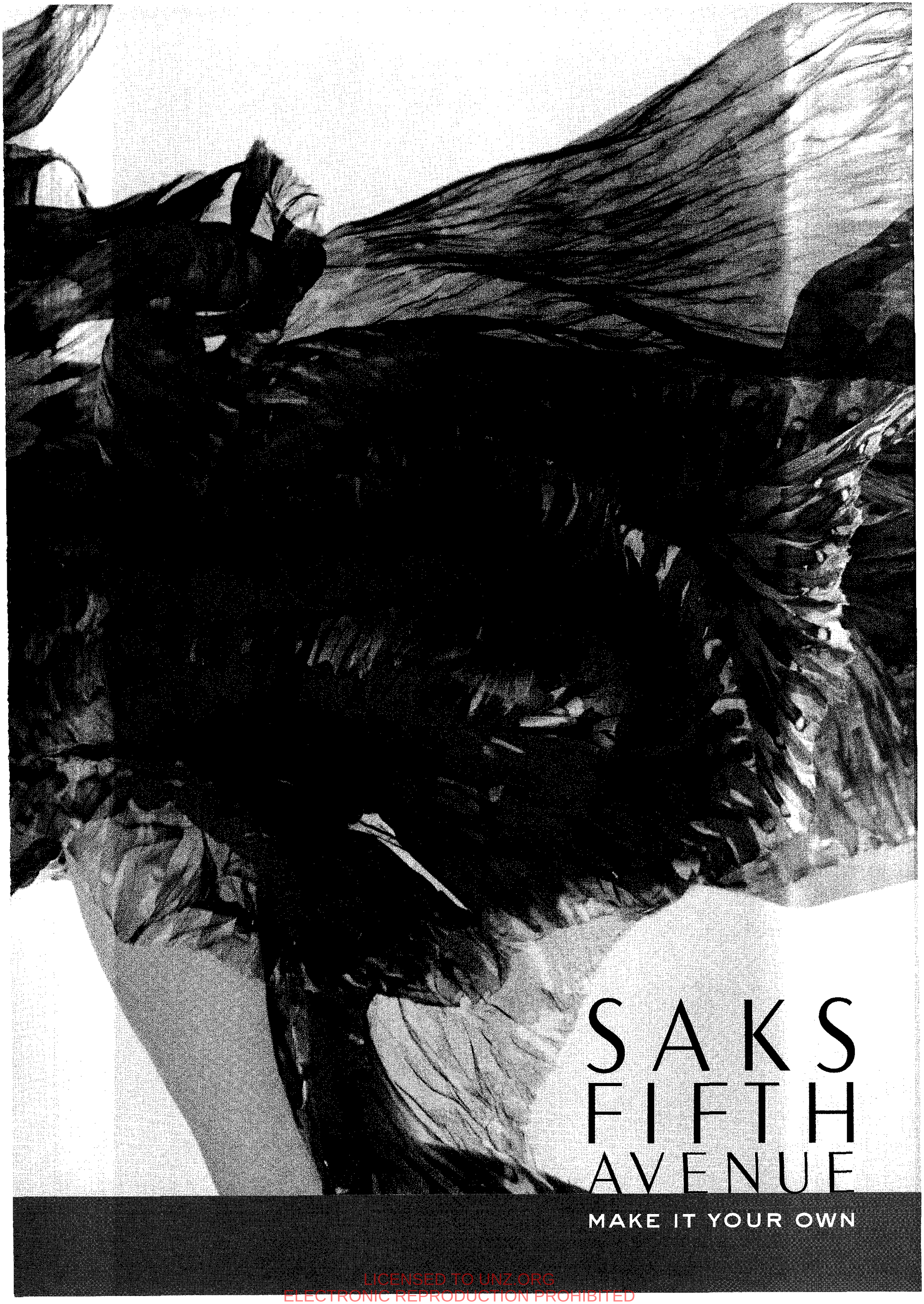
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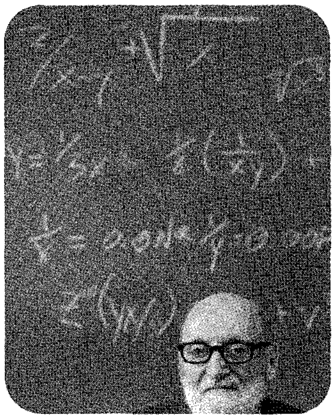

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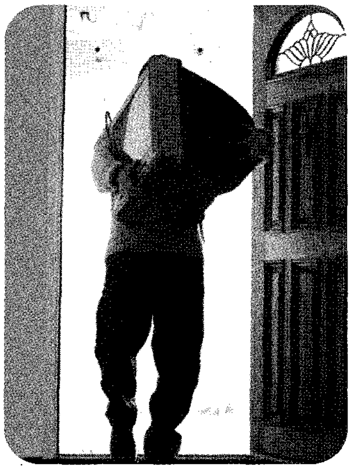

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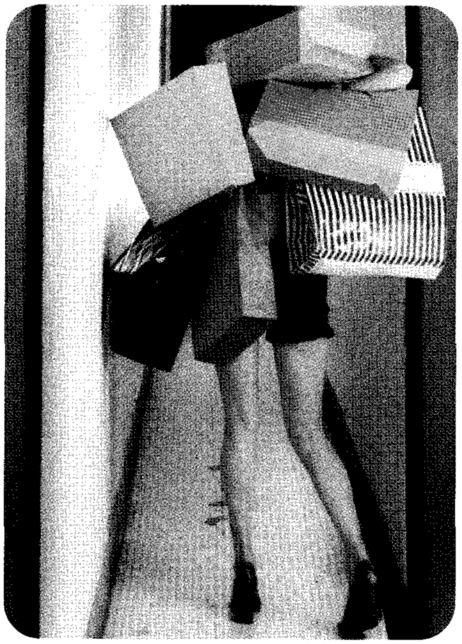

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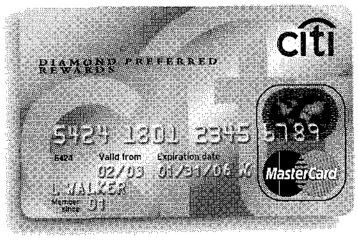
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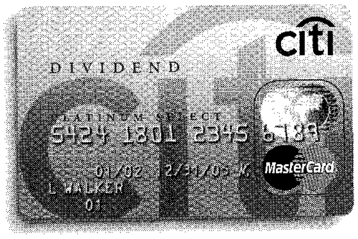
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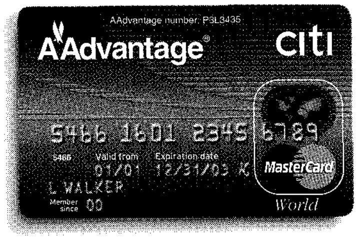
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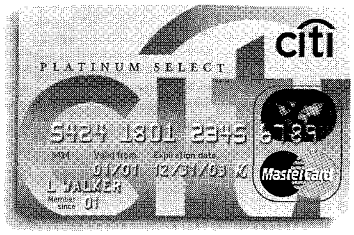
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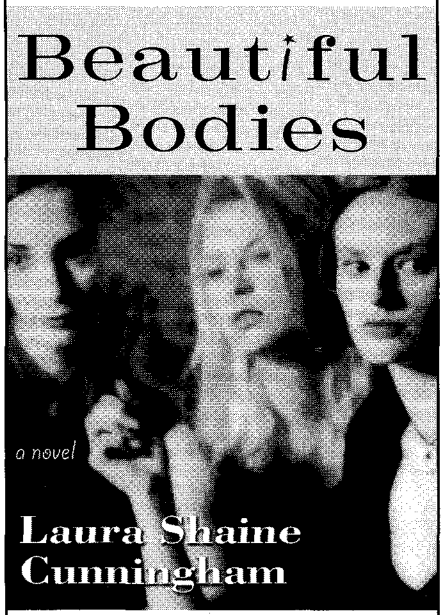

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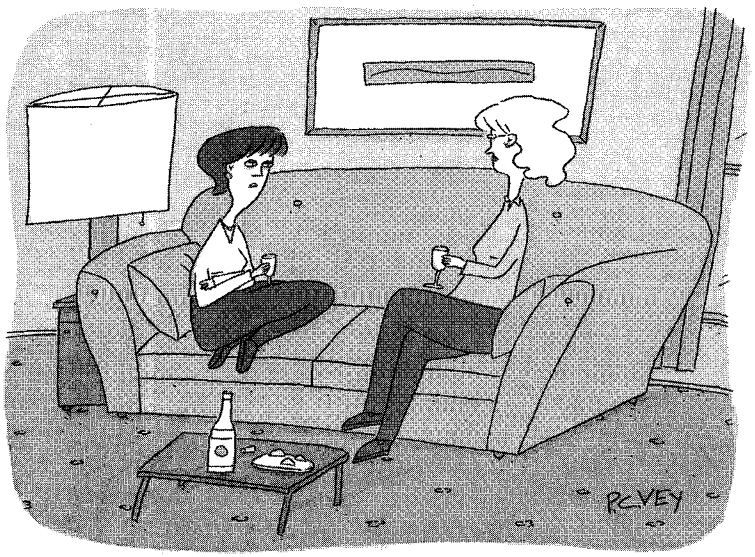

"I have an evacuation plan that includes Roger and one that does not include Roger."

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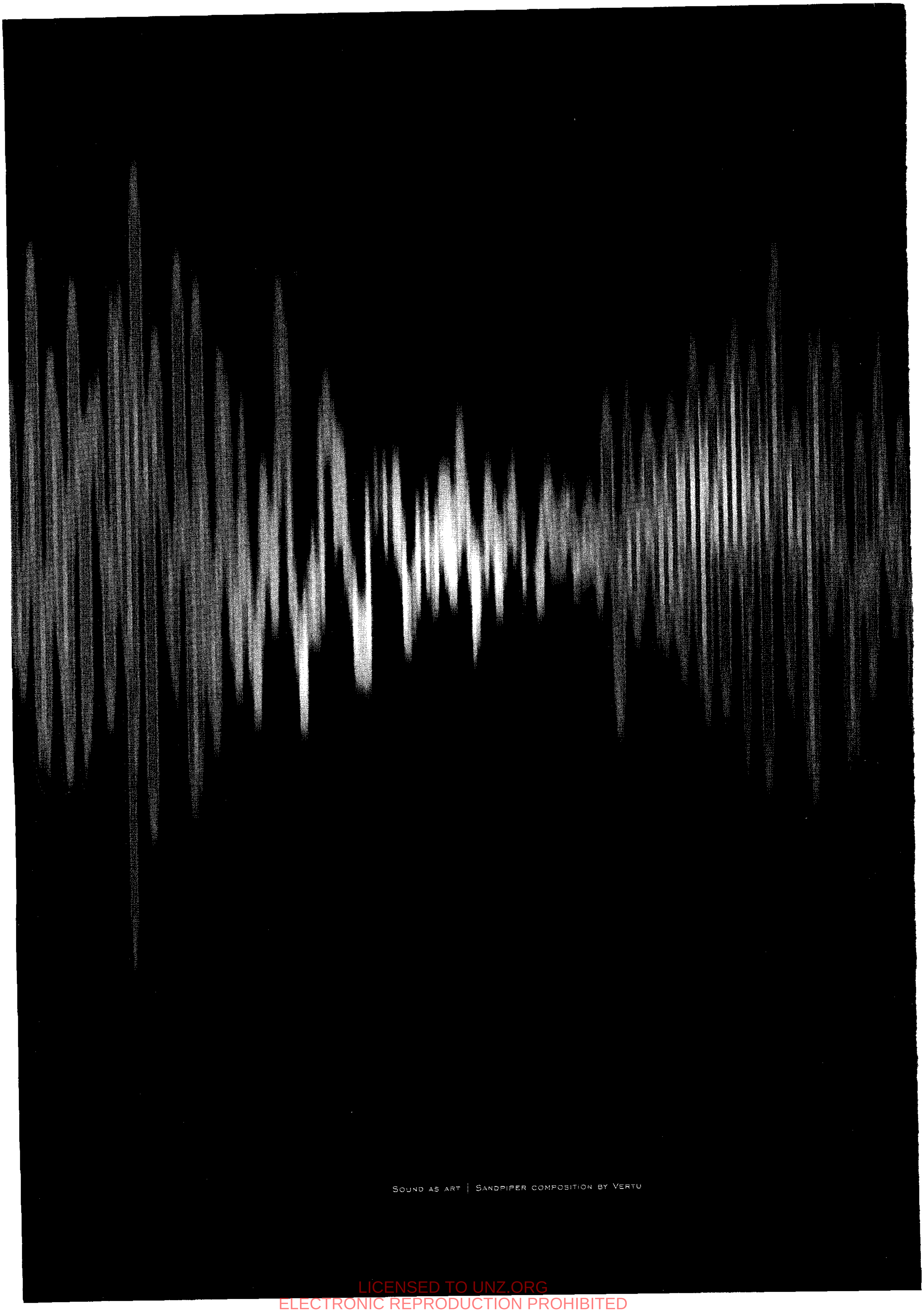
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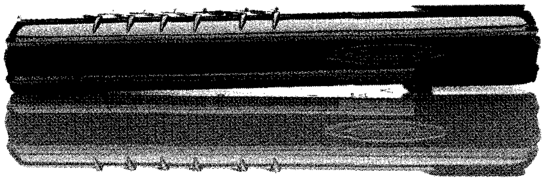

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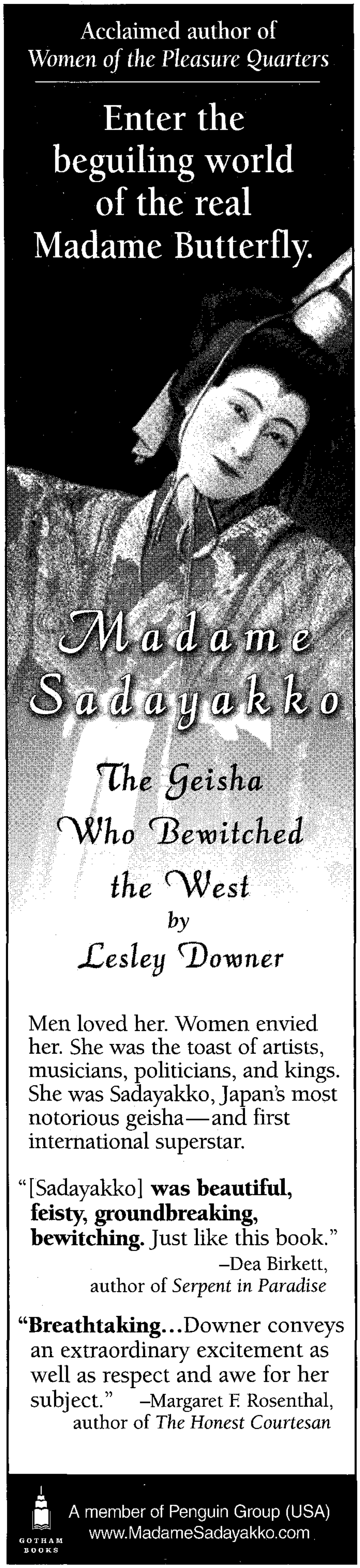

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MINDING SEGREGATION

One wishes, in reading Nicholas Lemann's review of "Reporting Civil Rights: American Journalism 1941-1973," that he had paid more attention to the many white Southerners who did support the civil-rights movement, not only at its height but, in some cases, long before the nineteen-sixties (A Critic at Large, February 10th). One such effort was the creation, in 1930, of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching. Two women established a branch of this organization in Mississippi, and within a few months seven hundred women had joined. They were very effective at organizing efforts to stop threatened lynchings. And in 1935 a number of white Mississippians gave their support, financial and otherwise, for appeals in the landmark Brown v. Mississippi case, a precursor to the Supreme Court's Miranda ruling. The case involved three black sharecroppers who had been sentenced to death for the murder of a white farmer. Their court-appointed white lawyer learned that their confession had been obtained under torture, and police witnesses admitted as much on the stand; when the men were convicted anyway, a campaign was mounted to prove their innocence. In the end, the Supreme Court overturned the verdict unanimously. These two examples may be classified as little more than benign paternalism; nevertheless, it is worth remembering that there have always been white Southerners who view racial justice as a moral issue and have been willing to speak up for it.
Patricia L. Stevens
Point Clear, Ala.

Lemann's review of "Reporting Civil Rights" was generally on the mark. However, I found one line in it disturbing. Lemann writes, "The racial problem that makes the strongest impression in the pages of 'Reporting Civil Rights' is not legal segregation (which many African-Americans didn't mind then and feel nostalgic about now) but something more basic: fear and a lack of dignity." How is it possible to say that many African-Americans did not mind legal segregation? What is the evidence? That for many years African-Americans accepted a system they had little power to change? The very book that Lemann is reviewing chronicles long struggles by thousands of people against legal segregation, and mainly because legal segregation was *inseparable* from the fear and indignity that it engendered. The "nostalgia" that Lemann may have encountered is more likely nostalgia for the sense of community cohesiveness that segregation inadvertently helped foster. Yes, now that legal segregation has ended, African-Americans (and I am one) have more choices in housing, jobs, and schools. This has tended to separate us, particularly by class, more than when our choices were constrained. But, if we feel nostalgia for a more cohesive time, please do not assert that it's nostalgia for segregation itself.
Liane Gay Rozzell
Arlington, Va.

WHY ARE THEY SO ANGRY?

The officials whom Jeffrey Goldberg spoke to in his article on intelligence-gathering after September 11th seem to have little interest in any discussion of the root causes of terrorism—except for one who said that we hadn't properly appreciated "how different, how evil" the terrorist mind-set is ("The Unknown," February 10th). Apparently, possible approaches to defusing hostility toward the United States—for instance, by supporting democracy and human rights instead of lending our support to dictatorial but friendly client states—are not a fit subject for intelligence analysts. This, perhaps, is where the real change in policy and understanding needs to begin.
Raphael Sperry
San Francisco, Calif.

•

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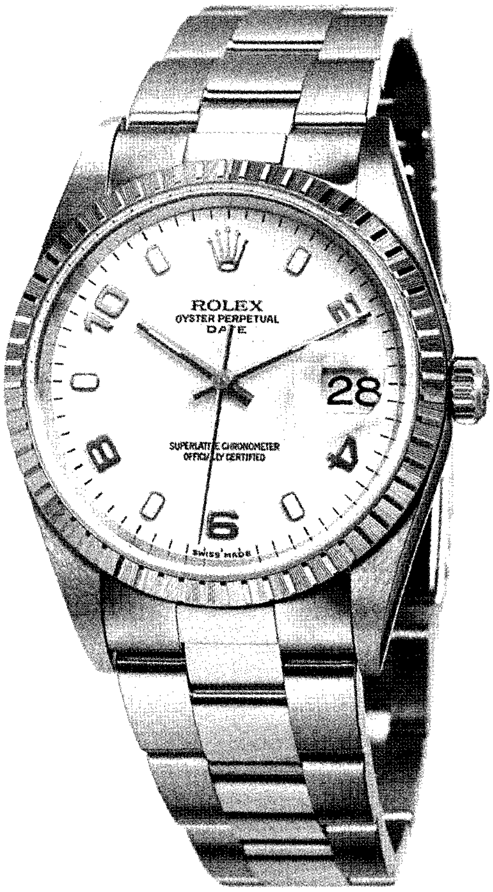

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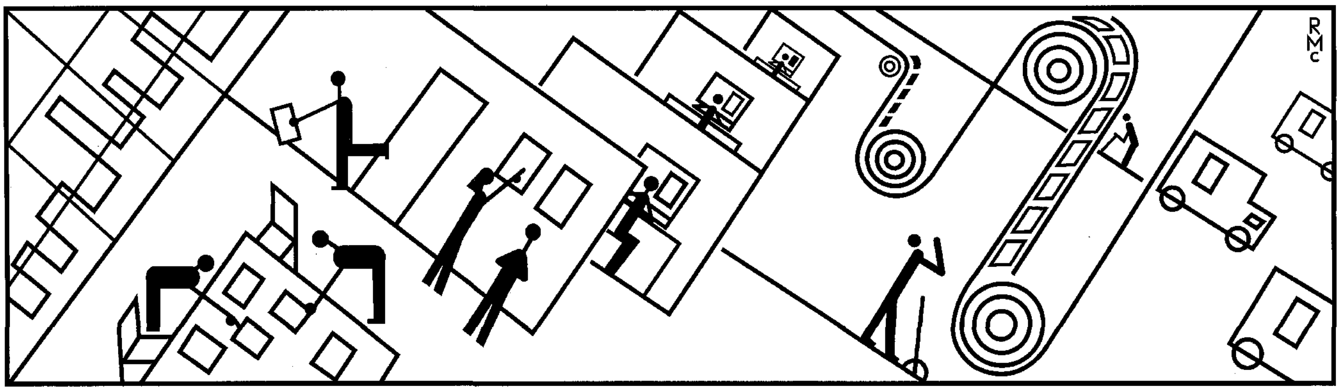

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AVENUE Q
A new musical with music and lyrics by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx and a book by Jeff Whitty chronicles the post-collegiate lives of twentysomethings in the East Village. The cast includes both humans and foulmouthed, multiply pierced puppets. In previews. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE BLACKS: A CLOWN SHOW
The Classical Theatre of Harlem's production of Jean Genet's shocking tale comes to the East 13th Street Theatre for a monthlong stay after an acclaimed run uptown earlier this year. Christopher McElroen directs. In previews. Opens March 13 at 8. (136 E. 13th St. 212-206-1515.)

A DAY IN THE DEATH OF JOE EGG
Eddie Izzard and Victoria Hamilton star in a revival of Peter Nichols' dark comedy, which has travelled to New York from London's West End, about a couple raising a handicapped child. Directed by Laurence Boswell. Previews begin March 14. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

DON JUAN
Theatre for a New Audience closes its season with Christopher Hampton's translation of Molière's play, with Byron Jennings as Don Juan and John Christopher Jones as his servant, Sganarelle. Directed by Bartlett Sher. Previews begin March 18. (Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-239-6200.)

FOLEY
The Irish Repertory Theatre presents a play by Michael West, first produced by Dublin's Corn Exchange, which stars Andrew Bennett and is directed by Annie Ryan. In previews. Opens March 13 at 8. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

FUCKING A
The Public Theatre presents a new work by Suzan-Lori Parks, a reimagining of "The Scarlet Letter" that incorporates ten original songs into a drama about abortion and revenge. Directed by Michael Greif. In previews. (425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

THE GALLANT JOHN-JOE
A one-man play by the Irish playwright Tom MacIntyre stars the Irish actor Tom Hickey. In previews. Opens March 17 at 7. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 212-206-1515.)

GOLDA'S BALCONY
Tovah Feldshuh is Golda Meir in a new play about the Israeli leader, written by William Gibson (author of "The Miracle Worker") and presented by Manhattan Ensemble Theatre. Scott Schwartz directs. Previews begin March 14. (55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200.)

LIFE (X) 3
A new comedy by Yasmina Reza ("Art") stars Helen Hunt and John Turturro and is directed by Matthew Warchus. In previews. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 212-239-6200.)

MY LIFE WITH ALBERTINE
Drawn from Proust's "Remembrance of Things Past," this new musical, directed by Richard Nelson ("Madame Melville," "James Joyce's 'The Dead'"), relates the romance between the young Proust (Chad Kimball) and Albertine (Kelli O'Hara). Book and lyrics by Nelson and music and lyrics by Ricky Ian Gordon. In previews. Opens March 13 at 7. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

NONE OF THE ABOVE
New Georges begins its eleventh season with a modern romantic comedy by the playwright Jenny Lyn Bader, set in an apartment on the Upper East Side and starring Alison Pill and Kel O'Neill. Julie Kramer directs. Previews begin March 15. (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 212-206-1515.)

O JERUSALEM
The Flea Theatre presents a new play by A. R. Gurney about a U.S. State Department official whose career and personal life are complicated by the events of 9/11. Stephen Rowe, Priscilla Shanks, and Rita Wolf lead the cast. Directed by Jim Simpson. In previews. Opens March 18 at 7. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-226-2407.)

THE PLAY WHAT I WROTE
Mike Nichols has helped bring this hit play over from London, about one-half of a comedy duo who wants to dump his partner and put on his own play but first needs to cast a major actor to play his co-star. Starring Sean Foley and Hamish McColl as the team, with a secret roster of guest stars. Kenneth Branagh directs. In previews. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

POLISH JOKE
Manhattan Theatre Club presents a new comedy by David Ives, starring Nancy Opel, Malcolm Gets, and Walter Bobbie. John Rando directs. In previews. Opens March 18 at 7:30. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

URBAN COWBOY
A musical based on the 1980 film stars Matt Cavenaugh and Jenn Colella. Directed by Lonny Price and choreographed by Melinda Roy, with musical direction by Jason Robert Brown. In previews. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

ALMA AND MRS. WOOLF
The playwright Anne Legault's drama imagines a meeting between Virginia Woolf and a notorious Canadian woman, Alma Rattenbury, who murdered her third husband. Translated from the French by Daniel Libman. Directed by Jim Pelegano. (Blue Heron Arts Center, 123 E. 24th St. 212-206-1515. Closes March 30.)

BARBRA'S WEDDING
If "Seinfeld" was a show about nothing, Daniel Stern's comedy is a play about nothing—although this nothing is really something. A neurotic, out-of-work actor (John Pankow) spends the day in his modest Malibu bungalow kvetching at his wife (Julie White) as helicopters and names-in-bold descend on Barbra Streisand's nearby mansion for her wedding. The celebrity wedding turns out to be less important than the convulsing and often moving dialogue between the solipsistic husband and his exasperated wife. There's more than a whiff of Neil Simon in the setup, but Stern's wife is more empowered than the women of Simon's plays or "Seinfeld"—although White makes sure that her character's soft heart comes through as well as her sharp tongue. Neil Patel sets the mood with a detail-perfect set—a middle-class California living room and kitchen whose walls shake when the whirlybirds fly over. Well directed by David Warren. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.)

BEXLEY, OH!
New York Theatre Workshop presents the première of a play written and performed by the actress Prudence Wright Holmes, about life in her home town in Ohio during the fifties and sixties. Lisa Peterson directs. (79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

LA BOHÈME
Baz Luhrmann has reset Puccini's opera in a cinematic Paris of 1957—on the eve of Godard's "Breathless"—and his *moto*-ready cast of young studs looks the part. Rodolfo and Marcello wear leather jackets and boots, Mimi sports a trench coat, and the red-hot Musetta (Jessica Comeau and Chlöe Wright alternate in the role) has hipster slacks and an Ann-Margret kittenishness.

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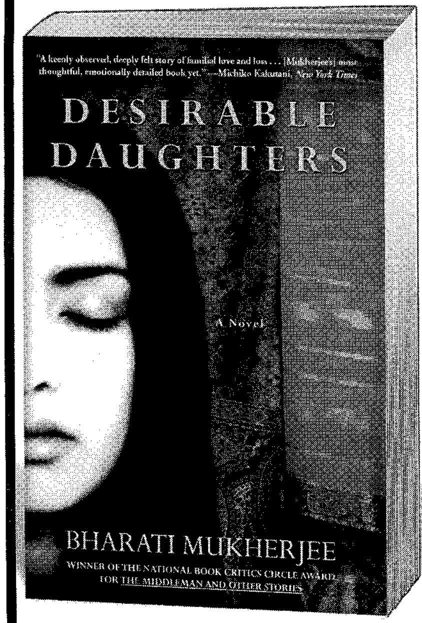
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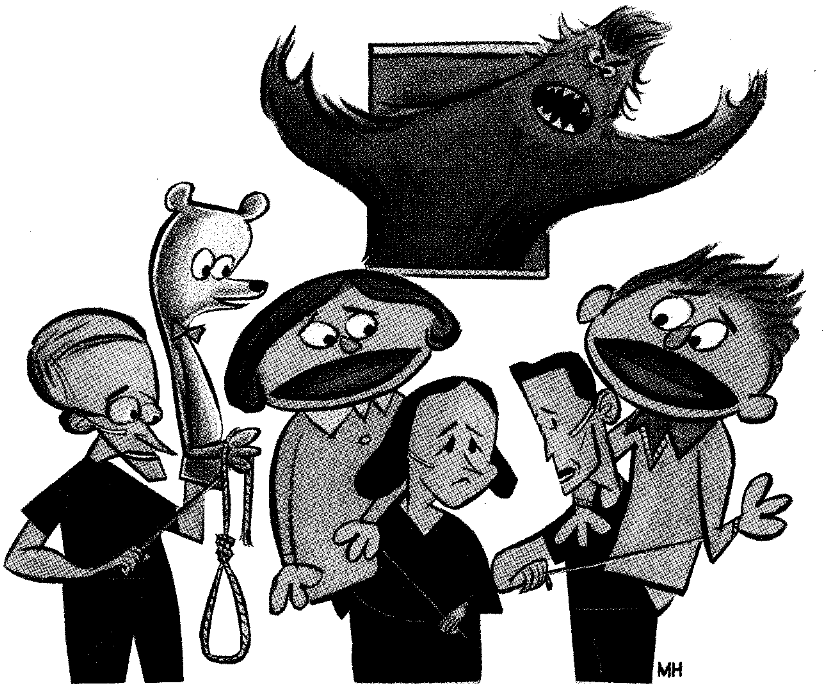
For Musetta's splendid "Quando me'n vo," the ensemble gathers on a silverized Parisian street that looks like a black-and-white Doisneau shot come to life. When this Rodolfo first lays eyes on this Mimi, enough heat jumps between the two of them to melt the snowflakes. It makes you want to hop a plane to Paris—the Paris in Baz Luhrmann's mind. Note: Three rotating casts perform the lead roles. (Broadway, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.)

BRACE UP! (2003)
Chekhov's ideas about the forces that drive theatre were radical, and they form a perfect launching pad for the radicalism of "Brace Up! (2003)," the Wooster Group's exceptional reimagining of "Three Sisters," which it first performed in 1991 and has now updated, adding elements of Kabuki and video projection. As ever, Olga, Masha, and Irina live with their brother, Andrei, in a provincial town, longing for Moscow, but here, the actors recite Chekhov's lines as if they were props, things that support the action but wouldn't be missed if mislaid. Still, the wit behind the deconstruction wouldn't hit home if there were no heart. As Andrei's wife, Natalya—the social-climbing rube who tries to break through the sisters' decorum—Anna Köhler provides the show with its emotional center, exposing the trap of the family's snobbery. In general, though, individual performances stand out less than those of the group as a whole. Seven actors in this production appeared in the 1991 staging, and the spectres of past Wooster Group performances are as palpable as Chekhov's well-ordered lives. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/10/03.) (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-858-2424. Closes March 23.)



Real people live alongside puppets in the East Village musical "Avenue Q."

MARCELLUS HALL

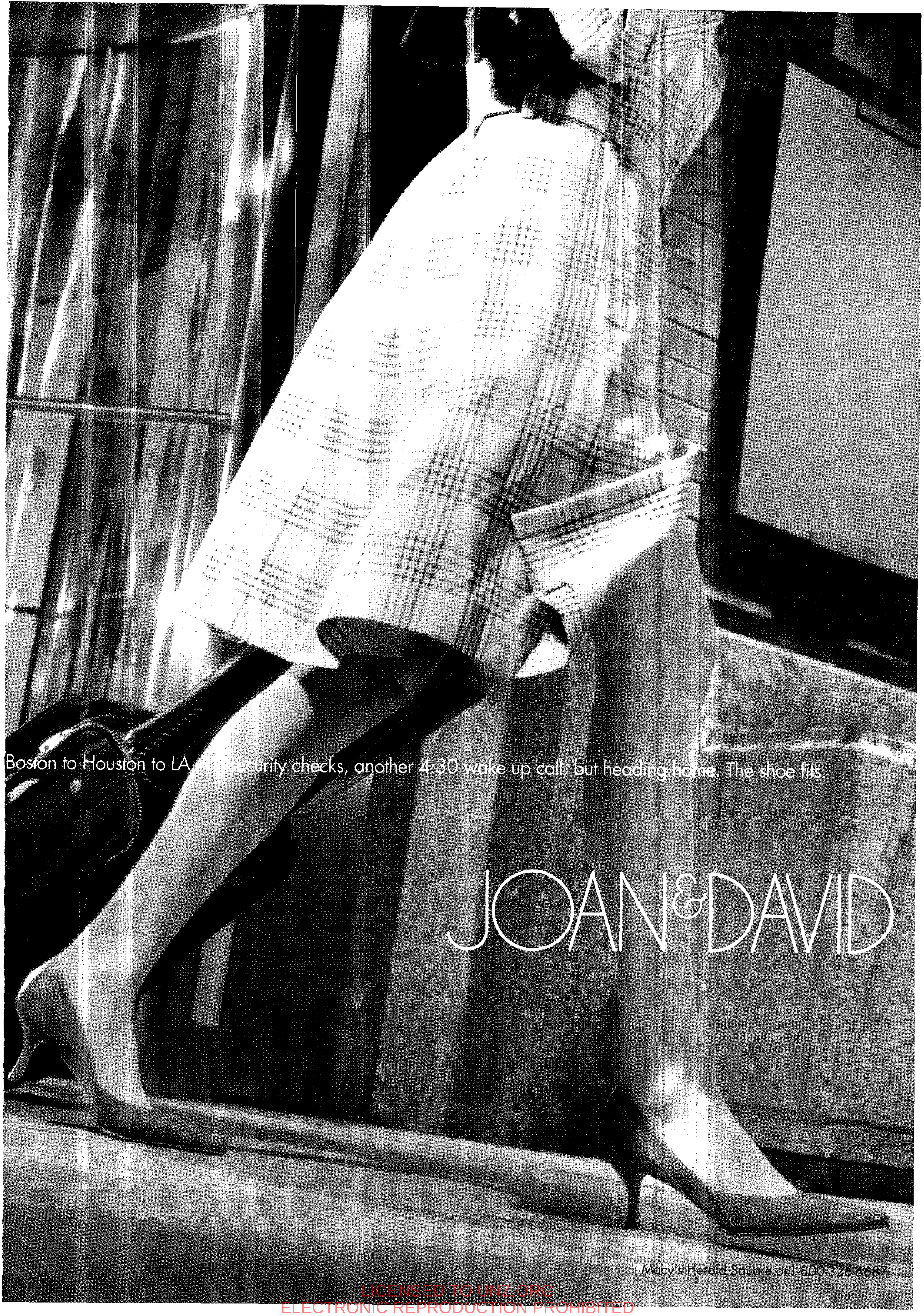
BUICKS
The Underwood Theatre presents a new play by Julian Sheppard, directed by Brian Kulick, about a Fresno car salesman who goes on an impromptu road trip to Albuquerque in pursuit of his wife after she takes off with their kids. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 212-206-1515. Closes March 30.)

THE CHINESE ART OF PLACEMENT
A former poet explains why he's ditched poetry for feng-shui, among other revelations, in Stanley Rutherford's entertaining, meandering one-man play. The script has some culs-de-sac, but T. Scott Cunningham keeps things moving with engaging displays of humor, rage, desperation, and bafflement. Directed by Jessica Bauman. (78th Street Theatre Lab, 236 W. 78th St. 212-206-1515.)

DUBLIN CAROL
In an office on Christmas Eve in modern Dublin, three characters confront each other around the wan colored lights of a small Christmas tree in Conor McPherson's nearly plotless, beautifully written play. John (Jim Norton) is a fifty-year-old undertaker who has little respect for the dead and whose rages and self-pity have alienated him from family and friends. As Mark, his young, boastful, somewhat lost protégé, Keith Nobbs is appropriately understated—a resilient willow withstanding the blasts of a blowhard. When John is forced to face his past in the form of his estranged daughter, Mary (Kerry O'Malley), you can see her try to hide her disgust with a fantasy she had probably held on to for most of her life: that once she had a strong and loving da. Directed by the playwright. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

EMPRESS OF CHINA
Pan Asian Repertory presents Ruth Wolff's play about Tzu-Hsi, the "Dragon Empress" who ruled China for nearly fifty years during the Ch'ing dynasty. Tisa Chang directs. (West End Theatre, 263 W. 86th St. 212-505-5655.)

LA FIESTA DEL CHIVO
(THE FEAST OF THE GOAT)
In the Repertorio Español's staged production of Mario Vargas Llosa's novel "The Feast of the Goat," about the Dominican despot General Rafael Leónidas Trujillo, the set design, costumes, and cast collude with the script to create scenes of haunting vividness and imbalance. We meet Trujillo (brilliantly played by Ricardo Barber, who resembles Alec Guinness both in appearance and in adaptability) as a helpless old man in a wheelchair, being spoon-fed by a nurse in a gaily printed smock who treats him like a baby. In the next scene, the invalid rises from his chair, dons his tyrant's moustache, his gold-braided military costume, and his cockaded hat—plumed with a fluff-fringed feather—and is joined by the bespectacled Presidente Joaquín Balaguer and by thuggish, grinning generals in reflecting sunglasses. The play conjures the mood of a Saul Steinberg cartoon: violence, pomp, sexual corruption, and abuse of power. The sure-handed director, Jorge Alí Triana (who adapted the novel with his daughter Verónica), sustains


Boston to Houston to LA, [illegible] security checks, another 4:30 wake up call, but heading home. The shoe fits.
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"Radiant Baby," a musical about the Pop artist Keith Haring, now at the Public.

the spell throughout this stirring production. In Spanish, with simultaneous-translation headsets available in English. (Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 212-889-2850.)

FIFTH OF JULY

Rarely has dialogue flown as surely as it does in this 1978 play, the first in Lanford Wilson's trilogy about the unconventional Talleys of conventional Lebanon, Missouri. After twenty-five years, the idea that cobbled-together families are as good as nuclear ones is no longer new, but Wilson got there first. Robert Sean Leonard is convincing as Kenny Talley, paralyzed in the Vietnam War, whose terror of his future is more moving than his inability to walk, and Parker Posey gives a breakthrough performance as Gwen, the woman married to the hunk John Landis (well played by David Harbour), whom Kenny and his sister, June, lusted after at Berkeley. Posey's Gwen is vital, mischievous, and surprising—a generous narcissist. The cast members work superbly together, fired by Jo Bonney's direction and Wilson's dynamic script. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

FLOWER DRUM SONG

Part fashion show, part night-club act, part hymn to Asian-American diversity, David Henry Hwang's update of the 1958 Rodgers and Hammerstein show, set in San Francisco's Chinatown, works far better than the original. Directed and choreographed by Robert Longbottom. (11/4/02) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. Closes March 16.)

HEARTBREAK HOUSE

George Bernard Shaw's 1917 play, written during the First World War, addresses the losses the war would bring—from a dearth of eligible suitors for England's women to the waning of the British Empire. Though typically Shavian in its preachiness, the play is also typical in its mixture of wit, offhand charm, and social insight. Gus Kaikkonen's clearheaded direction jibes with the peerless timing of a talented cast led by George Morfogen (Captain Shotover) and Rachel Botchan (Ellie Dunn) to create a strong revival of a timely play. (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

HEAT LIGHTNING

A new musical by George Griggs (the book was co-written with Paul Andrew Perez) tells the story of a country-rock singer who's obsessed with Elvis, bored by his life and his wife in the suburbs, and looking for trouble. (Kirk, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE HIGH PRIEST OF CALIFORNIA

Charles Willeford was a novelist in the Raymond Chandler tradition; in this, his only play—presented by the 29th Street Rep—he gives an engrossing depiction of sexual manipulation. Willeford is particularly skilled at presenting deceit as blunt honesty, and the reverse, as he unfolds his classic noir tale of an unhappily married woman and the man she picks up one night. As the struggling couple, David Mogentale and Carol Sirugo both turn in powerful performances. Directed, with a fine respect for telling silences, by Leo Farley. (212 W. 29th St. 212-206-1515.)

HOLD PLEASE

In Annie Weisman's bitterly funny office comedy, two generations of working women clash in the break room: twentysomething assistants versus middle-aged career secretaries. On a "Dilbert"-style set of revolving cubicles, the actresses show that, even if the women's movement has changed over the last few decades, in many ways, the woman's workplace has not. Erika (Emma Bowers) and Grace (Kathryn Rossetter), twenty years apart in age, have both succumbed to affairs with the boss, and the youthful Jessica (Jeanine Serralles) and the well-ripened Agatha (Laura Esterman) discover that they can be equally scheming. Directed by Connie Grappo. (Blue Heron Arts Center, 123 E. 24th St. 212-206-1515. Closes March 30.)

I WANT YOU TO

Two one-act, two-character sketches, each directed by its author. The first, by Eric Maierson and starring Ken Forman and Monique Vukovic, involves a kinky audition. The second, by Lawrence Levine and played by Jicky Schnée and Grant Varjas, depicts a woman dipping her toe back into the dating pool. The Paradise Theatre Company has made excellent use in the past of its loft-like acting space, suggesting not only the feel of a New York apartment but the lives of the people inside, most recently in its production "Peter and Vandy." But these two plays, which employ the same basic elements, lack conviction. Each begins with a knock on the door, and within minutes the person entering makes a move to leave. The playwrights should have let them go. (Paradise, 64 E. 4th St. 212-206-1515.)

KIMBERLY AKIMBO

David Lindsay-Abaire's new comedy, which incorporates sitcom conventions with disease-movie-of-the-week melodrama, chronicles the misadventures of Kimberly, a teen-ager who suffers from a rare aging disorder that makes her look much older than her years. (She is played by Marylouise Burke, who is sixty-two.) In Lindsay-Abaire's topsy-turvy world, which owes a bit to Ionesco and Durang, Kimberly is an old soul, and the wacky grownups around her are hopelessly immature. Though the play doesn't offer much in the way of narrative propulsion, David Petrarca's fast-paced direction keeps it galloping along, Robert Brill's candy-colored sets add cheer, and Burke's wide-eyed performance is endearing and surprisingly believable. (Manhattan Theatre Club, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

LITTLE EGYPT

Atolas Theatre Company presents Lynn Siefert's screwy comedy about a hard-bitten, hard-drinking waitress and her two daughters—one slutty, the other an ethereal nerd—living in a small town in southern Illinois. One sister falls for a self-absorbed mooch, the other for a sensitive security guard (the mother has her hopes on the town mayor), and Shakespearean double crosses and coincidences follow. Directed by Karin Bowersock. (Producer's Club 2, at 616 Ninth Ave. 212-206-1515. Closes March 16.)

MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM

Set in 1927 at a white-owned record company, August Wilson's exquisite play has none of the quaintness of the usual dramatic depictions of black life; instead, it puts African-American behavior into both a socioeconomic and a spiritual context. On David Gallo's cunning set in the revival at the Royale, the white bosses sit in an unreachable, glass-panelled control room above the stage. Below, in the crepuscular gloom of a dilapidated office, the musicians banter and kid each other as they wait for the arrival of their meal ticket—the Delta blues singer Ma Rainey, played with sure swagger by Whoopi Goldberg. Wilson's play is itself a blues song, and, under Marion McClinton's deft direction, it does onstage what Rainey says her songs do: it understands life; it takes an empty world and fills it up with something. (2/17 & 24/03) (242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

OBSERVE THE SONS OF ULSTER MARCHING TOWARDS THE SOMME

On a beautiful set, built by Alexander Dodge and lit by Donald Holde, a platoon of Irish Protestant volunteers struggle with their pride, their fear, and their duty on the eve of one of the bloodiest battles of the First World War. Aided by tricks of the light, their barracks becomes, alternately, a battle escarpment, a Celtic monument, and a church, the scenes intermingling in an eerie overlay that recalls Stoppard's "Arcadia." In a fine and versatile ensemble, well equipped to carry off Frank McGuinness's charged dialogues, Justin Theroux emerges as a major force. Playing the lone toff in the bunch, and the lone survivor, he displays

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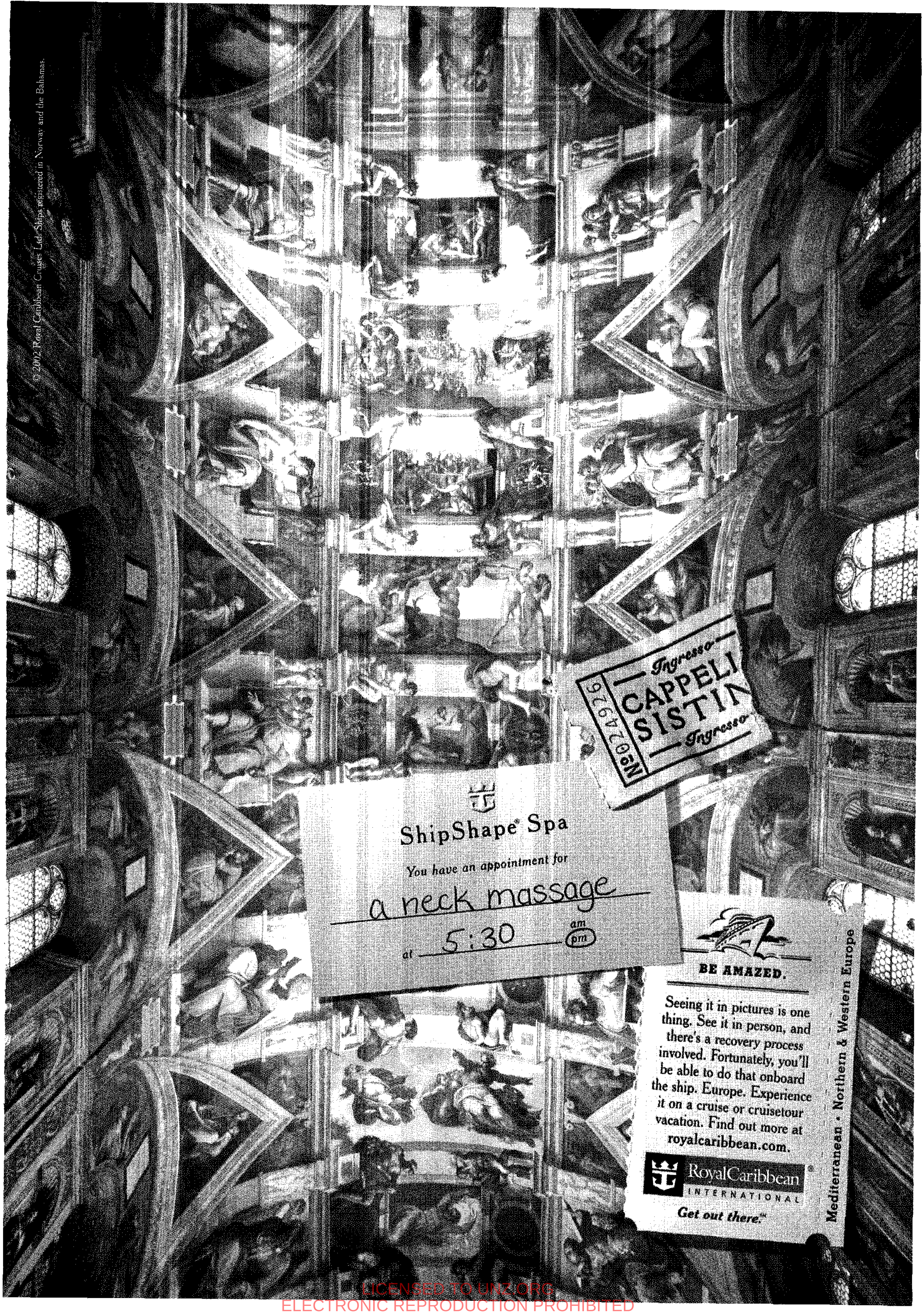

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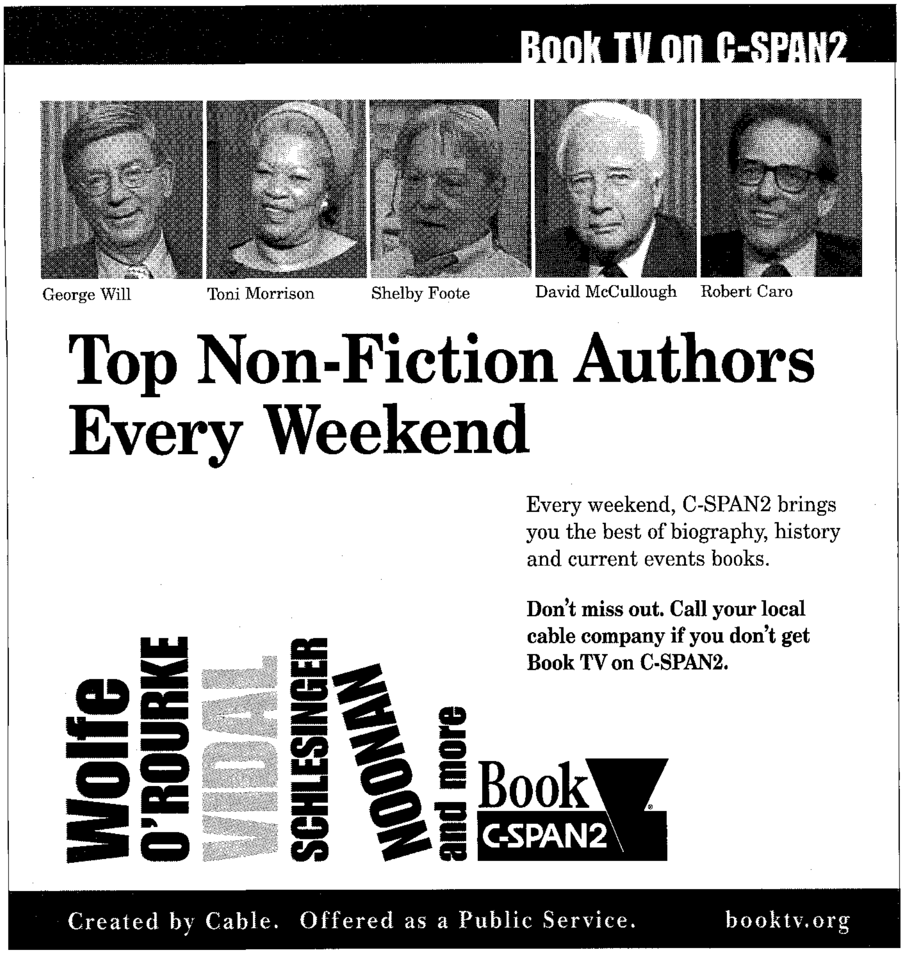

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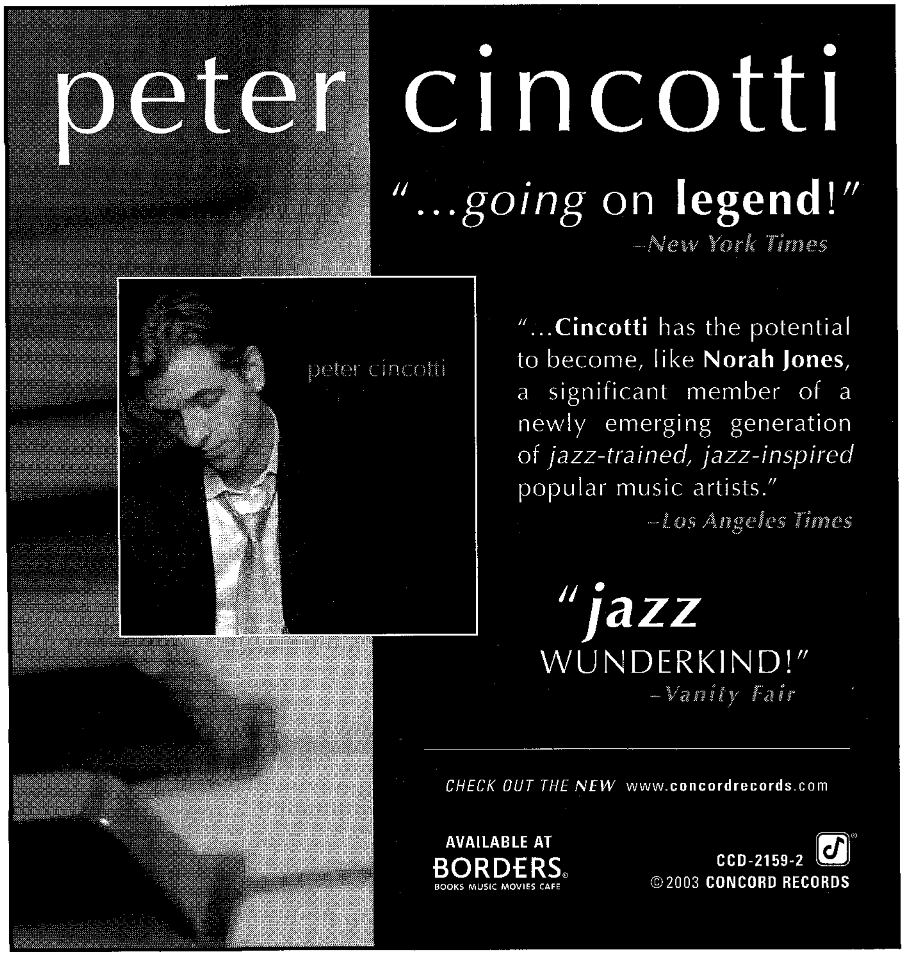

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astonishing breadth of character—and an impressively soldierly physique. Directed by Nicholas Martin. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

OUR LADY OF 121ST STREET
Stephen Adly Guirgis's play speaks gorgeously to our deracinated times. A group of fractured souls congregate at the Ortiz Funeral Home in Harlem to mourn Sister Rose—a nun who had taught most of them as children—but the wake turns into a vigil when Sister Rose is stolen from her casket. Guirgis's drama is predicated on the conviction that dreams are something you wake up from. In fact, though, his brilliantly drawn characters have been so punished by life after their school days, and so exhausted by their grievances, that they are way past dreaming. Like the stolen corpse, the characters' sense of loss is a fact of life that is both their tragedy and their own doing. Burnished to a shine by Philip Seymour Hoffman's deft direction, "Our Lady of 121st Street" is a fever chart of the heart's deceptions. (10/14 & 21/02) (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-307-4100.)

PANIC! (HOW TO BE HAPPY!)
In "Panic," the avant-garde director Richard Foreman revisits themes he has explored in previous work: the limitations of language, the way that a performance reshapes itself during viewing, and the differences between men and women and how their attempts to connect generally end in some kind of violence. Watching the four main performers who make up the nucleus of Foreman's Ontological-Hysteric Theatre, we know we're in the presence of an ensemble in the best sense of the word. The actors embody separate aspects of Foreman's dense, difficult, often hilarious mind, working together. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-533-4650.)

PRINCE HAL
In Bennett Windheim's play, a Jewish New Yorker returns to his childhood neighborhood, Brighton Beach, with his non-Jewish girlfriend. Directed by Elysabeth Kleinhans. (45th Street Theatre, 354 W. 45th St. 212-352-0255. Closes March 29.)

RADIANT BABY
The late graffiti artist Keith Haring (1958-90) is the ostensible subject of this disappointing, somewhat strident show. Haring came of age as an artist and a gay night-club figure in the nineteen-eighties, when his peers—Jean-Michel Basquiat and Kenny Scharf, among others—were high on the city and intent on representing its cultural mix. Their work was raw and hybrid, influenced as much by New Wave music as by the Pop iconography of Andy Warhol. Haring's simple, charming images of crawling babies, winged TV sets, flying saucers, and dancing dolphins were like a science-fiction aficionado's vision of the metropolis. As Haring, Daniel Reichard is appropriately boyish, but there's no book to work with, and all his singing, dancing, and emoting reveals little about the artist's inner life. George C. Wolfe, who directed this fast-paced production, knows how to keep the large cast moving, but Haring and his times end up as simplistic and reductive as Haring's drawings: they're lovely to look at but without resonance. Among the cast members, Aaron Lohr stands out as Haring's erstwhile friend and lover, Carlos, who also succumbed to AIDS. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200. Closes March 23.)

A RITUAL OF FAITH
Set in nineteenth-century Italy, Brad Levinson's new play seems plucked from the Yiddish melodramas that played a century ago on the Lower East Side. After the Catholic Church kidnaps a young Jewish boy, the child's parents (Matthew Boston and Laura Fois) are told that if they are baptized, they may be reunited with their son. "A few drops of water on your head," the boy's father tells his hesitant wife, "a prayer, and that's all." If they give in, they will not only defy their heritage, they will compromise the position of the boy's uncle (the excellent Tibor Feldman), who is a leader in the Jewish community. Although some of

POP NOTES

WELCOME TO 1979

Has there ever been a band more aptly named than the Buzzcocks? Both cutting and preening, both romantic and combative, the group produced a handful of classic punk singles in the late seventies, and, though the masturbation anthem "Orgasm Addict" may have lost its shock value over time, the band's ability to pierce the heart of complex relationships ("Ever Fallen in Love?" "Lipstick," "Why Can't I Touch It?") has given them greater staying power than their more overtly political contemporaries. The group broke up in 1981, reunited in 1989, and has been at it ever since, onstage and in the studio. **"Buzzcocks"** (Merge) is the least imaginatively titled of any of the post-reunion records, but maybe that's because the lead singers and songwriters Pete Shelley and Steve Diggle wanted to put the spotlight on the music: the twelve songs here are easily the strongest set since the band's vintage days. Shelley's "Jerk" and "Keep On" manage to be both nuanced portraits of damaged love and showcases for squalling guitars, and Diggle contributes catchier, if simpler, fare such as "Wake Up Call" and "Driving You Insane."

"Singles Going Steady," the definitive Buzzcocks collection, was released in September, 1979, a month before the second record by a young singer-songwriter named Joe Jackson. Initially, Jackson was one of the troika of dyspeptic Brits that also included Elvis Costello and Graham Parker, but in the intervening years he evolved (or devolved, depending on your loyalties) into an enigmatic dilettante, trying his hand at cocktail jazz, classical composition, and film music. On **"Volume 4"** (Rykodisc), Jackson reassembles his original band, which brought the world such hits as "Is She Really Going Out with Him?" and "I'm the Man," and attempts to recreate the magic on eleven new songs. Musically, he succeeds wonderfully. The band delivers sharp, ska-inflected pop that only rarely indulges in overblown orchestration, and his vocals have the same keening edge they did a quarter-century ago. But the songs are uneven: some, like "Take It Like a Man" and "Awkward Age," revive the sexual politics that marked Jackson's heyday; others, like the stately but pretentious "Blue Flame" and the allegedly satirical "Thugz 'R' Us," fall flat.

—Ben Greenman

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the scenes in the ensuing battle between faith and family are predictable, the play pushes toward an affecting conclusion. Directed by Igor Goldin. (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

ROSES IN DECEMBER

Victor Slezak and Keira Naughton star in Victor L. Cahn's new epistolary play about a rich and revealing correspondence between a young Ph.D. candidate and the famous author she hopes to persuade to attend her college's alumni weekend. Directed by T. L. Reilly. (Urban Stages, 259 W. 30th St. 212-206-1515. Closes March 23.)

RUSSELL SIMMONS' DEF POETRY JAM ON BROADWAY

The hip-hop legend has brought together spoken-word stylists from his HBO show and from the national poetry-slam circuit to create an exuberant, defiant production. The rap bards deliver poems that are part autobiography, part social commentary—addressing everything from love, America, racism, and terrorism to Krispy Kreme doughnuts. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

SCATTERGOOD

Brian Murray brings considerable charm to the title role in Anto Howard's earnestly sophomoric play about a professor of medieval English literature at Dublin's Trinity College. Scattergood, whose pedagogical concentration is chivalric honor and courtly love, takes an extracurricular interest in a budding romance between two of his students, the brilliant but pathologically awkward Brendan Hillard (T. R. Knight) and the openly self-assured Miss Regan (Tari Signor). The teacher's tutoring of the young man begins comically, but painful truths are eventually forced out into the open. Directed by Doug Hughes. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Closes March 22.)

STRING FEVER

Cynthia Nixon and Evan Handler star in an Ensemble Studio Theatre production of a new play by Jacquelyn Reingold that addresses the topics of single motherhood, fertility, and string theory. Directed by Mary B. Robinson. (549 W. 52nd St. 212-206-1515.)

TEA AT FIVE

Kate Mulgrew plays Katharine Hepburn in a drama about the life of the actress, written by Matthew Lombardo and directed by John Tillinger. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

TWENTY-FOUR EVENINGS OF WIT & WISDOM

The Colleagues Theatre Company presents a season of fully staged readings on the subject of aging, performed by a revolving cast that includes Kitty Carlisle Hart, Sandy Duncan, Tammy Grimes, Alvin Epstein, and a raft of other seasoned thespians. Directed by Don Amendolia, with musical direction by John Mulcahy. (Arclight, 152 W. 71st St. 212-787-8716. Closes March 30.)

VINCENT IN BRIXTON

Lincoln Center Theatre presents the American première of a new play by Nicholas Wright, about Vincent Van Gogh's early days in London. Richard Eyre directs. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

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Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St.
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45 Bleecker Street Theatre, 45 Bleecker St.
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FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St.
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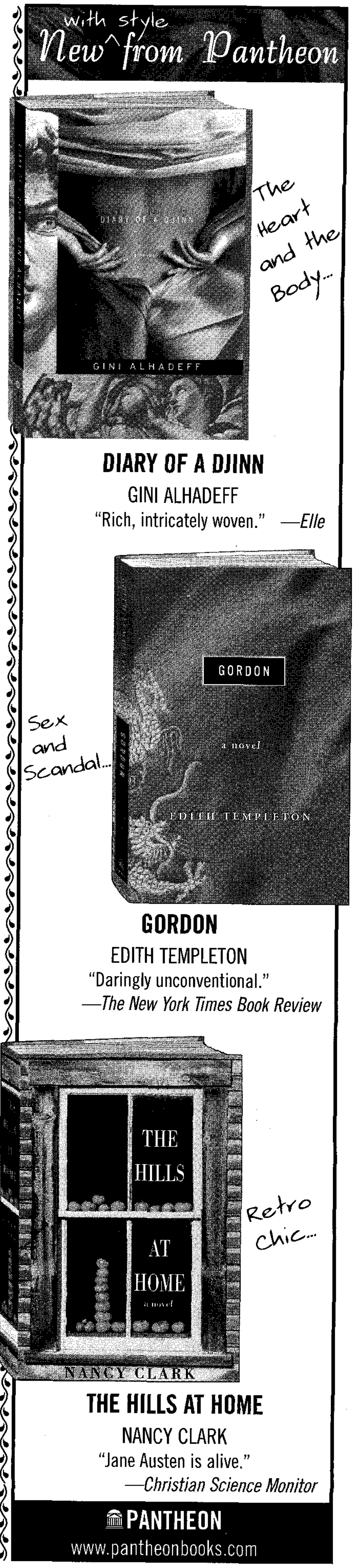
42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

FRANKIE AND JOHNNY IN THE CLAIR DE LUNE
Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.



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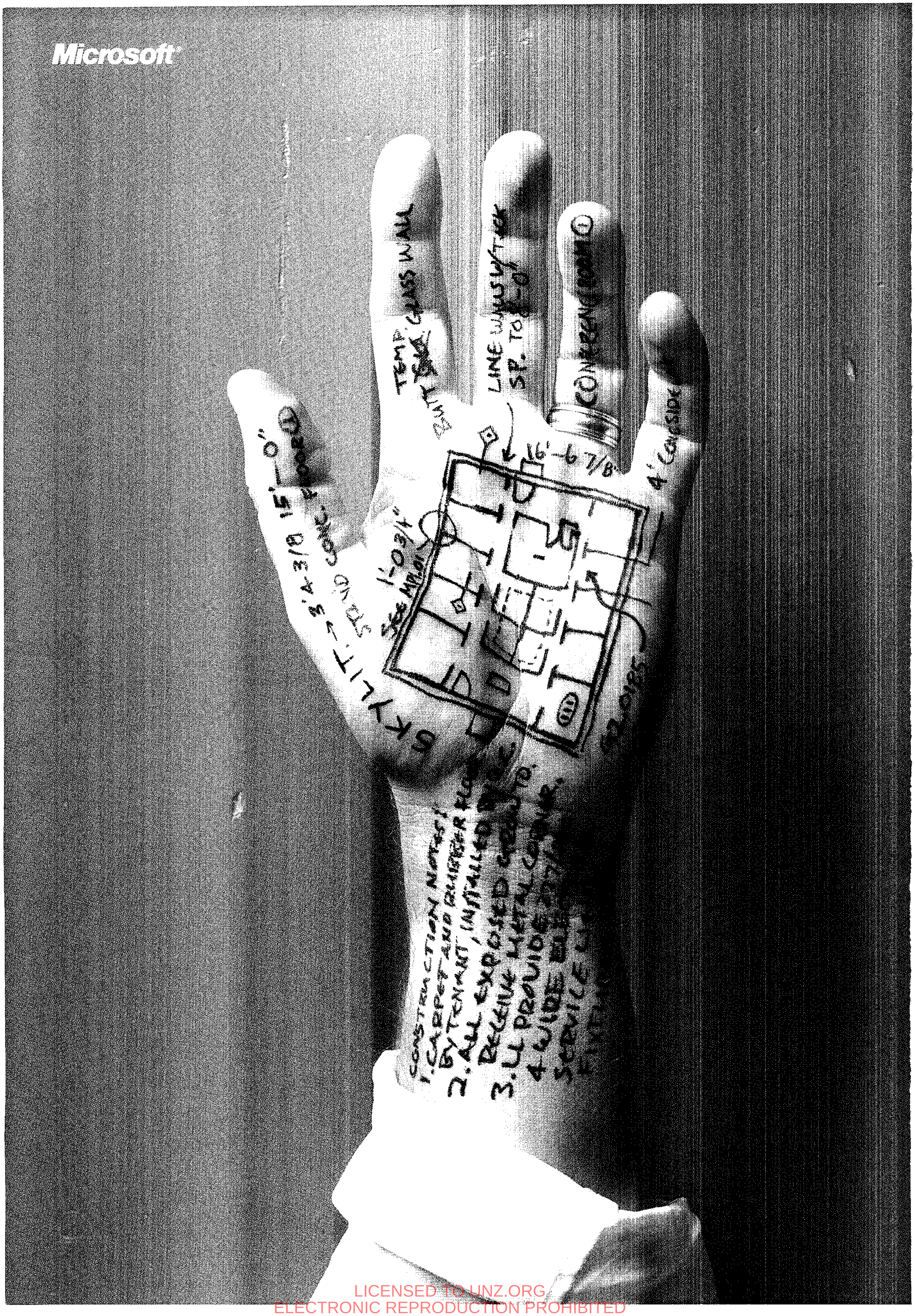
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BUTT JOINT
LINE W/ASSY W/ TACK
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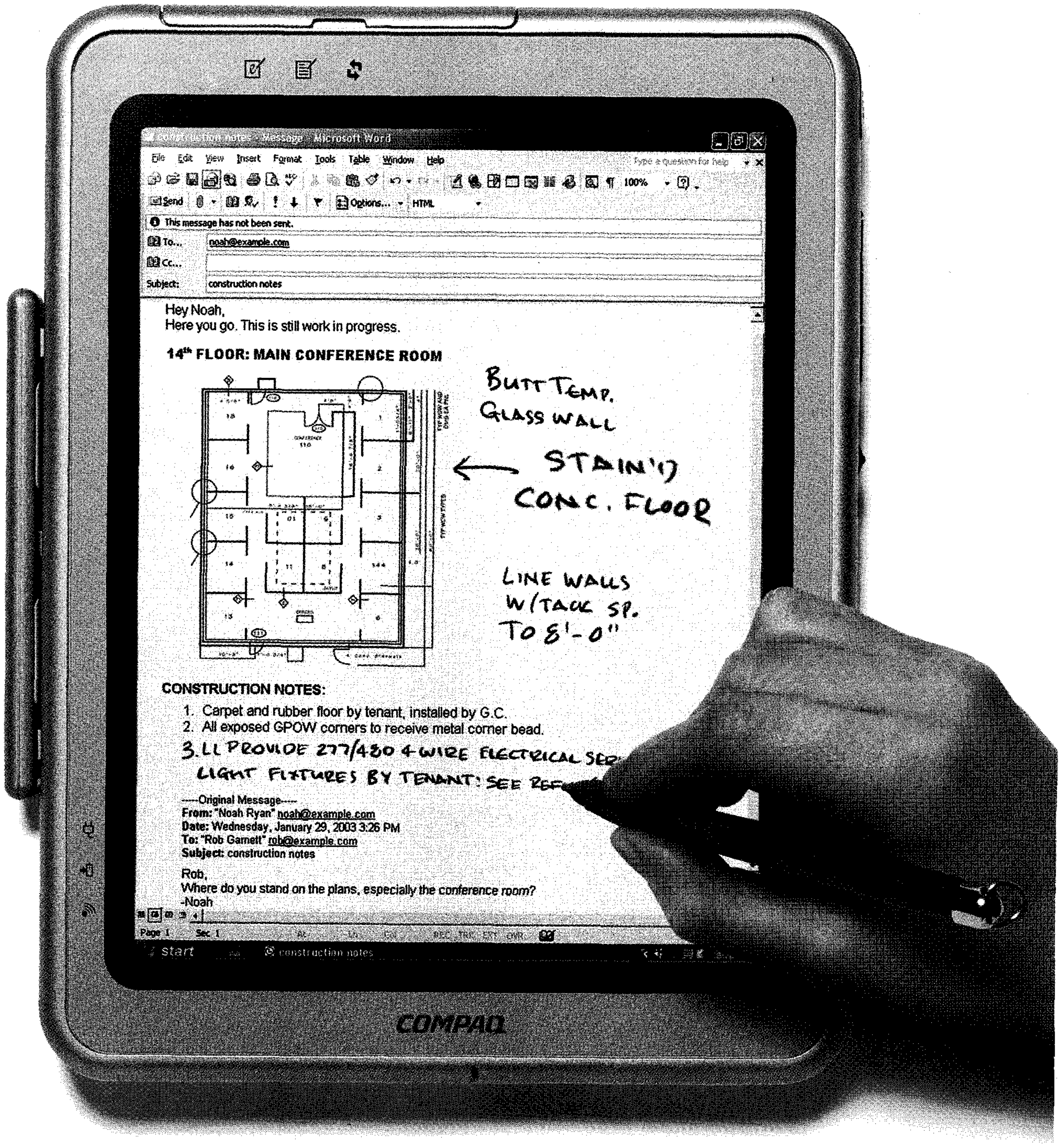
CONFERENCE ROOM ①
4' CONSIDE
16'-6 7/8"
1'-0 3/4"
SEE MP.01
SKYLIT → 3'4-3/8 15'-0"
STAND CONC. FLOOR ①
52.0185
CONSTRUCTION NOTES:
1. CARPET AND RUBBER BASE
BY TENANT, INSTALLED BY
2. ALL EXPOSED
DECKING METAL
3. LL PROVIDE
4. WIDE
SERVICE
FIXTURE


construction notes - Message - Microsoft Word
File Edit View Insert Format Tools Table Window Help
Type a question for help
100%
Send
Options...
HTML
COMPAQ
Page 1 Sec 1
start
construction notes

This message has not been sent.

To... noah@example.com

Cc...

Subject: construction notes

Hey Noah,
Here you go. This is still work in progress.

14th FLOOR: MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM

BUTT TEMP.
GLASS WALL

STAIN'D
CONC. FLOOR

LINE WALLS
W/TACK SP.
TO 8'-0"

CONSTRUCTION NOTES:

1. Carpet and rubber floor by tenant, installed by G.C.
2. All exposed GPOW corners to receive metal corner bead.
3. LL PROVIDE 277/480 4 WIRE ELECTRICAL SER
LIGHT FIXTURES BY TENANT: SEE REF

-----Original Message-----
From: "Noah Ryan" noah@example.com
Date: Wednesday, January 29, 2003 3:26 PM
To: "Rob Garnett" rob@example.com
Subject: construction notes

Rob,
Where do you stand on the plans, especially the conference room?
-Noah

HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St.
212-307-4100.

I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St.
212-307-4100.

MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St.
212-563-5544.

LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St.
212-307-4100.

PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St.
212-695-3401.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St.
212-239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St.
212-921-8000.

SAY GOODNIGHT, GRACIE
Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St.
212-239-6200.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St.
212-477-2477.

TAKE ME OUT
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St.
212-239-6200.

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St.
212-307-4100.

TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St.
212-239-6200.

URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St.
212-239-6200.

DANCE

BALLET TECH
Eliot Feld's Ballet Tech has its season at the Joyce, presenting new and repertory works, including "Mr. XYZ," a première set to music by Leon Redbone, choreographed by Feld, and danced by Mikhail Baryshnikov. The monthlong season includes "Lincoln Portrait," "Variations on 'America,'" and two other premières, "Pianola: Indigo" and "French Overtures." ♦ March 12 at 8: "Simon Sez," "Endsong," and "Paper Tiger." ♦ March 13 at 8: "Straw Hearts," "Against the Sky," and "Pacific Dances." ♦ March 14 at 8: "Against the Sky," "Pianola: Indigo," and "Paper Tiger." ♦ March 15 at 8: "Aurora I," "Tongue & Groove," "Mr. XYZ," "Lincoln Portrait," and "Behold the Man." ♦ March 16 at 2: "Simon Sez," "Impromptu," "Mr. XYZ," "Lincoln Portrait," and "Behold the Man." ♦ March 18 at 8: "Simon Sez," "Pianola: Indigo," "Yo Shakespeare," and "Mending." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Through April 13.)

HEIDI LATSKY DANCE
Bernhard Schlink's novel, "The Reader," about a woman's compromises during the Holocaust, is the springboard for a new work by Heidi Latsky about fear in wartime, which kicks off the 92nd Street Y's ninth annual Harkness Dance Project. Formerly a principal dancer with Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, Latsky is a small, fierce performer who holds nothing back and makes each movement sharply distinct. In "Bound," a sequel to an earlier "Reader"-related piece she created on the theme of hatred, Latsky juxtaposes aspects of innocence, dread, and cathartic release. Her dancers echo her force with lesser intensity: she's the big splash, they're the ripples. (Duke, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-415-5552. March 12-13 and March 15 at 8 and March 16 at 2 and 7.)

PAUL TAYLOR DANCE COMPANY
In the central duet of Paul Taylor's new "Promethean Fire," Lisa Viola dives backward through the air. In the long moment before Michael Trusnovec catches her, you can't help but hold your breath. Throughout the rest of the piece, set to orchestrations of Bach fugues and preludes, Taylor provokes similar accesses of disbelief. The City Center season features three alternating programs of repertory, including "Black Tuesday," a dance that contrasts the dark reality of the Depression with the Hollywood glitz of the era, and "Dream Girls," a première set to the music of the Buffalo Bills barbershop quartet. (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. March 12-14 at 8, March 15 at 2 and 8, and March 16 at 3 and 7:30.)

Triple Threat, at S.O.B.'s (see Night Life).

"THE CARMEN SUITES (AND OTHER TREATS)"
Rebecca Stenn's whimsical but exacting PerksDanceMusic Theatre arrives at St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie to perform the company's signature piece, "The Carmen Suites"—in which dancers and musicians trade roles, and instruments double as props, as Bizet plays on—and several premières, including "Left of Fall," a rock update of Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring." (Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. March 13-15 at 8:30 and March 16 at 7:30.)

DANCE THEATRE WORKSHOP
Neil Greenberg's new work, "Two," joins the D.T.W. "Carnival" rotation this week, and shows his characteristic technique: laying bare the process of dance-making while keeping the dance's subject teasingly oblique. In the première, two dancers perform separate solos center stage. As they execute Greenberg's signature motion—letting their twisting torsos guide their arms in fluid motion—the choreographer's image looms above them, projected onto the back wall, matching them in exact synchrony. Zeena Parkins accompanies the dance with a collage of found sound culled from rehearsals, Italian film scores, and electric harp. (219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. March 11-12 at 7. Through March 30. Call the box office for the full "Carnival" schedule.)

FEAST
Julia Mandle, the director of J Mandle Performance, likes to set her work in unusual spaces. For "Feast," the group's new hybrid dance performance and gallery installation, co-presented with Danspace Project's "Out of Space" series, she chose a cavernous, five-thousand-square-foot former stable on the Brooklyn waterfront. Nested within the stable is an enormous windowed structure through which the audience can watch four dancers, dressed in exaggeratedly geometric costumes, enacting scenes inspired by Plato's "Symposium." The company, gathered around a tabletop, takes part in a slow-motion, stylized banquet, choreographed by Beppie Blankert, in which the dancers themselves are the table's legs; hollows cut in the tabletop make room for them. Observers may enter the space every half hour over a three-hour period and wander at will, watching the spectacle or seeking conversation and refreshment in the second-floor lounge, up where the horses used to feed. (The Stable, 16 Main St., Dumbo, Brooklyn. 718-246-7440. March 13-14 from 7 to 10 and March 15-16 from 4 to 7. Through April 6.)

"MUSIC, DANCE, AND MARTIAL ARTS OF MANIPUR"
The valley of Manipur, in northeastern India, is surrounded by nine mountain ranges. Geographically isolated, its inhabitants have kept their traditions relatively pure, importing and exporting little (although the British did learn polo from them). Now, for the first time in nearly a decade, the Anjika Manipuri Dance Troupe comes to town, bringing their master drummers and musicians with them. Like Bharata Natyam and other dance forms from the subcontinent, the folk dances of Manipur tend toward refined, gestural adaptations of stories drawn from Hindu epics. Manipuri variations, however, are more athletic, and more driven by percussion. The drummers themselves dance, and in martial-arts spectacles, swords fly. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. March 16 at 7.)

AILEY II
Alvin Ailey's young touring ensemble comes to New York to perform repertory at Aaron Davis Hall. (City College, Convent Ave. at 134th St. 212-307-7171. March 14 at 8, March 15 at 2 and 8, and March 16 at 3.)

"BROWN BUTTERFLY"
In a multimedia homage to Muhammad Ali, elegant, powerful dancers jog in backward loops, landing lightly on their feet, making circuits around each other like human Spirographs. As they land, they punch the air in deliberate, heavy-fisted feints and exhale sibilant sounds—the "tss" that a boxer makes through his mouth guard as he exerts himself. The dancers, choreographed by Marlies Yearby, share a stage with video montages of Ali by Jonas Goldstein and with live musicians—including the composer Craig Harris, on trombone, who conceived the program. "Brown Butterfly" has a free preview at the World Financial Center Winter Garden this week and will have its première at Aaron Davis Hall at City College at the end of this month. (220 Vesey St. 212-945-0505. March 13 at 6:30.)

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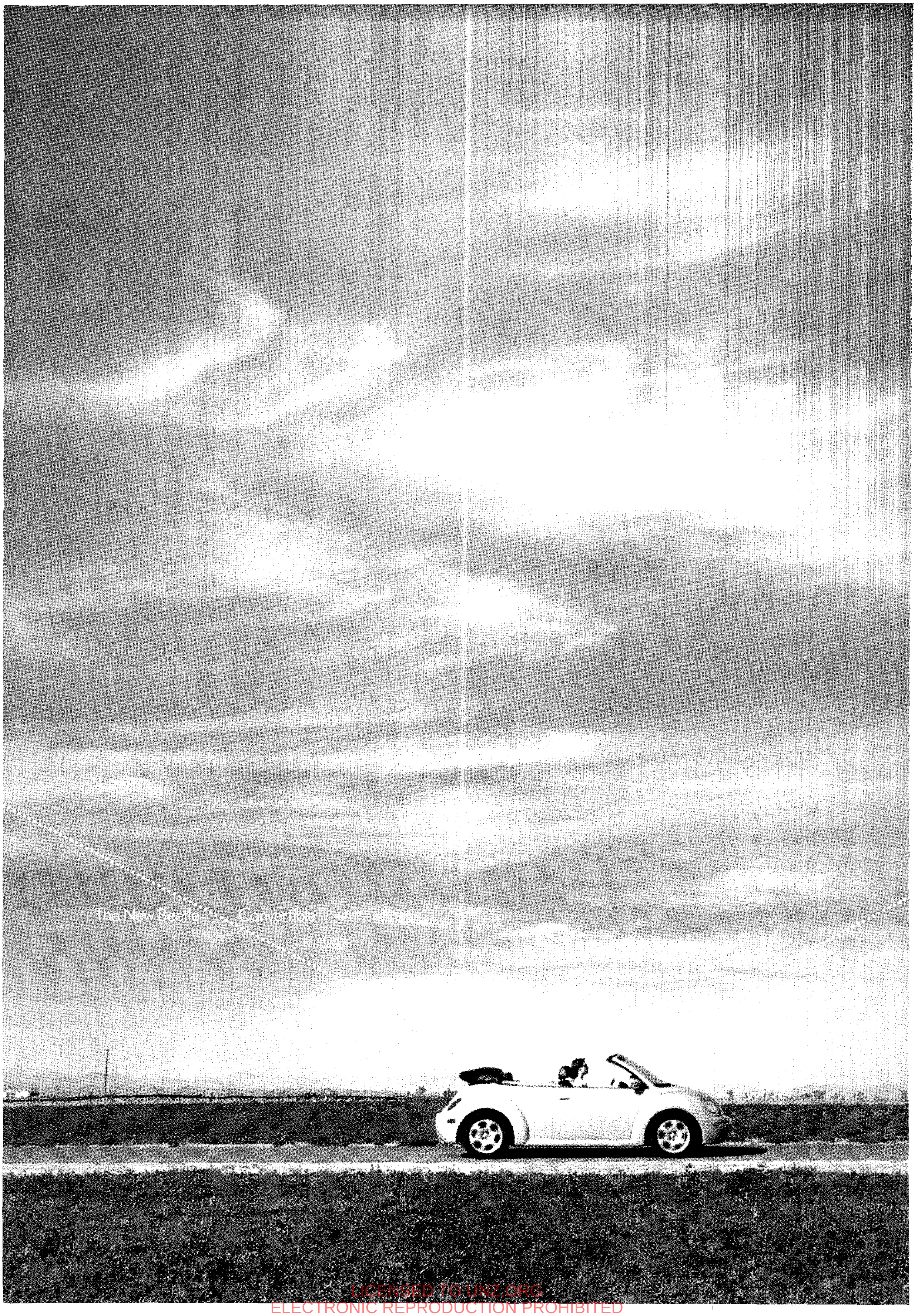
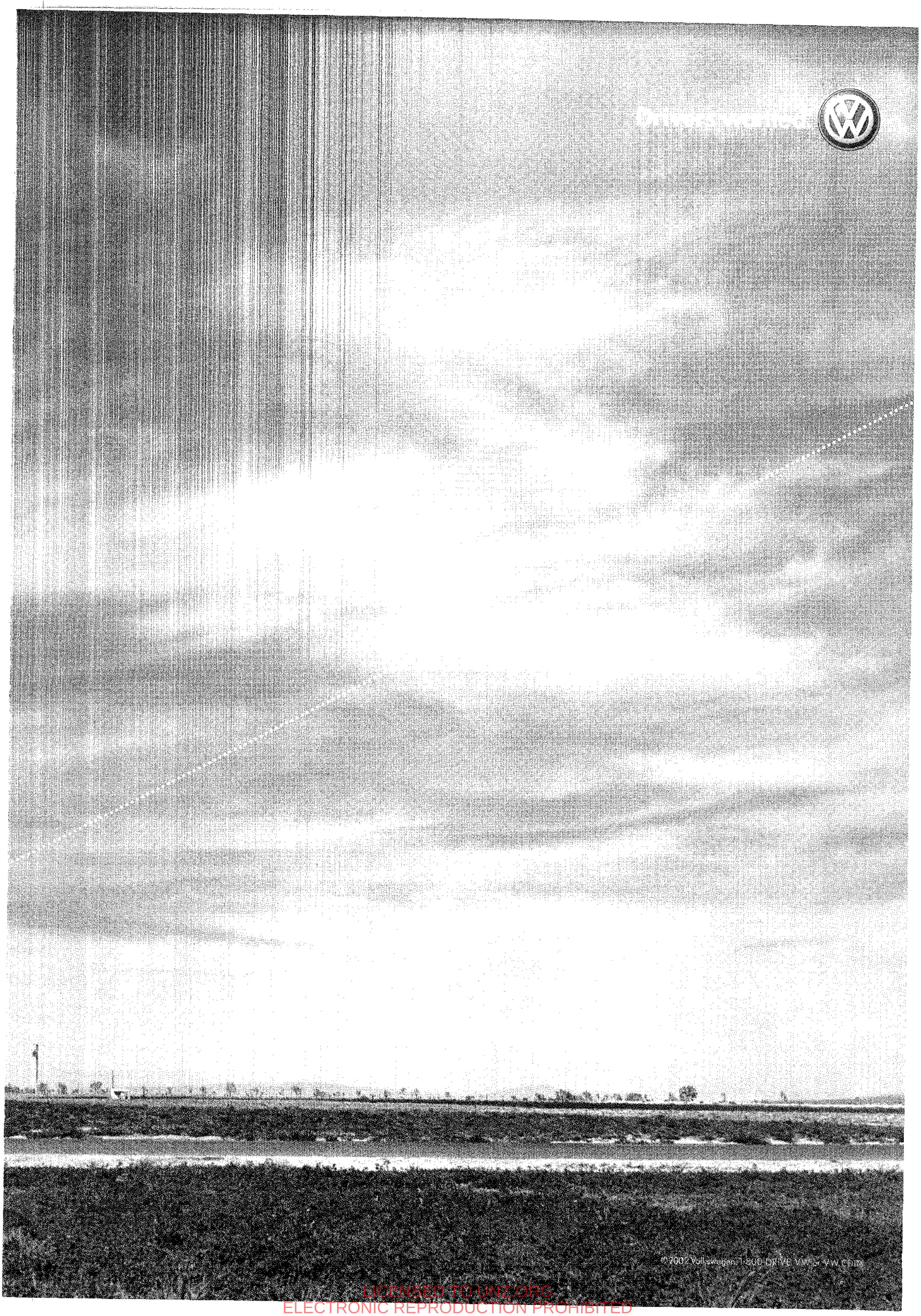

The New Beetle
Convertible



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(Personal recommendations from your independent booksellers with BOOK SENSE)

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Maret Orliss, Vroman's Bookstore, Pasadena, California

"This beautifully written novel tells the story of three very different women, who, over a 25-year period, were consecutively married to the same man. By weaving their stories together, Haigh has written a tale of women everywhere and the reasons behind the choices they make."

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NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

OLD & IN THE GRAY
Back in 1973, before "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" was even a gleam in a screenwriter's eye, bluegrass music crossed the cultural divide when Jerry Garcia joined the mandolin player David Grisman, the fiddler Vassar Clements, the guitarist Peter Rowan, and the bassist John Kahn to record the classic album "Old & in the Way." Garcia and Kahn may be gone, but the remaining members have reunited (and brought along Herb Pedersen on banjo and Bryn Bright on bass) for more old-time fun. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-840-2824. March 12 at 8.)

THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND
Celebrating the release of "Hittin' the Note," its first studio album in nine years, the venerable band holds court with a thirteen-night residency at the Beacon. (Broadway at 74th St. 212-307-7171. March 13-15 and March 17-18 at 8. Through March 30.)

"ELECTRONIC XTRAVAGANZA"
The Kitchen has organized a three-day tribute to the silicon chip, or at least to the music it helps create. On opening night the Frenchman Luc Ferrari, one of the avatars of the abstract genre known as *musique concrète*, joins Williamsburg's own DJ Olive. This is followed by a two-night jam session organized by the downtown collective Share, in which attendees are encouraged to use their own equipment (laptop, Game Boy, etc.) to make ad-hoc rhythms. (512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. March 13 at 8 and March 14-15 at 7.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
March 13 at 8: The Institute's "Interpretations" series brings in **Shadow & Light,** an improvisational quartet featuring the reedman Joe Giardullo and the saxophonist and trumpeter Joe McPhee. With the pianist and computer wiz Michael J. Schumacher. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St.) ♦ March 15 at 8: **Dervish,** a traditional Irish group from Sligo. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St.) (For more information about both shows, call 212-545-7536.)

THE ROOTS
Fresh from backing Eminem at the Grammy Awards, Philadelphia's hardest-working hip-hop band returns. With the soul-rocker **Cody Chesnutt.** (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 212-307-7171. March 14 at 7:30.)

"JAZZ BREAKTHROUGHS"
The jazz historian and radio personality Phil Schaap turns his obsessive attention to Billie Holiday and swing-era popular songs, with the help of still thriving veterans, including the vocalist Carol Sloane, the trumpeter Joe Wilder, and the pianist John Bunch, as well as such younger, tradition-minded players as the bassist Greg Cohen and the trombonist Wycliffe Gordon. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. March 17 at 8.)

ROBERT HUNTER
The erstwhile Grateful Dead lyricist and author of many of the band's signature songs, including "Truckin,'" resumes his unharried career as a folksy country-rock troubadour. (Town Hall. March 18 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—March 12: The New York City native and eight-time All Ireland champion fiddler **Eileen Ivers.** March 13: The P-Funk mastermind **George Clinton** puts on marathon performances in which he shows off his newest crop of backing musicians, demands audience participation in the form of hilarious and often scatological chants, and demonstrates time and time again that funk is its own reward. March 18: The brainchild of former Public Image Ltd. drummer Martin Atkins, **Pigface** is an amorphous ensemble of cutthroats drawn from the realms of punk, industrial, and alternative rock. While the band has never had a firm lineup, past contributors have included members of Ministry, Killing Joke, Dead Kennedys, Tool, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, and Nine Inch Nails. Decidedly not for the faint of heart.

BLARNEY STAR
43 Murray St. (212-732-2873)—March 14: The former "Riverdance" fiddler **Athena Ó Lochlainn.** March 17: A St. Patrick's Day celebration with the **Blarney Star Band,** featuring Dermot Grogan, Don Meade, and John Dillion.

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (212-228-6300)—March 12: The Canadian she-trio the **Be Good Tanyas** have slipped a little something into the lovelorn twang of traditional country music: sultry vocal harmonies and understated jazz overtones, all of which is as gritty and nice as a truck-stop mochaccino. With the singer-songwriter **Tom Burris.**

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—March 14: Heart and quirkiness abound when the song-

TABLES FOR TWO

BRASSERIE 8½
9 W. 57th St. (212-829-0812)—The man behind the desk didn't miss a beat when he heard a visitor whistling in admiration over the serpentine, orange-carpeted staircase that descends into the basement of the notoriously curvy tower behind the big lipstick-orange 9 on Fifty-seventh Street. "It's by Hugh Hardy," he said, citing the architect who converted the former storage room into one of the most extravagant dining and drinking spaces in town. Famous signatures are all over this misnomer of a restaurant, which seems to have been designed for first-class space travellers who like lots of elbowroom. The drawings that line the circular lounge, which serves meals to drop-ins up to eleven o'clock, are by Matisse and Giacometti. The colorful, backlit panel at the far end of the dining room is a stained-glass copy of Léger's "Les Constructeurs."

The chef, Julian Alonzo, is similarly pedigreed. His mentors include David Bouley and Guy Savoy, and, though most of the old-time brasserie standbys are on hand, the menu encourages you in boldface to go for concoctions on the order of Asian tuna tartare with passion-fruit cream and fresh wasabi, or the truffle-crusted loin of lamb. Simplicity is the better route. (The seafood tartares tend toward the gummy, and the striped bass all but disappears under a crust of horseradish.) The kitchen does particularly well with such classics as a côte de boeuf with bone marrow and pommes soufflées, and a roast chicken of which any Lyonnaise *grand-mère* would be proud.

One of the architect's most felicitous touches is the mirrors, one to a booth, which are tilted to enable the museum-quality clientele to people-watch without staring. Still, there may be a bit too much aesthetic largesse. On a recent evening, an order of drinks took twenty minutes to arrive. When the waiter was asked what had delayed him, he grinned and gestured toward the Léger. "Isn't that great?" he said. "I stopped for a look at it on the way." (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $19-$32.)

—Charles Michener

+1 800 704 7317
JILSANDER
11 East 57th Street, New York

writer **Mason Jennings** leads his trio of Minnesotans in an evening of melodic folk pop. March 15: **Joseph Arthur,** whose claim to fame was being the first pop act on Peter Gabriel's globe-trotting label Real World. As you might expect, this singer-songwriter shares his mentor's flair for moody grooves and inspired arrangements. On his latest release, "Redemption's Son," Arthur displays his knack for atmospheric production and lonely lyrics.

IRVING PLAZA

17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—March 14-15: The Celtic punk of the **Saw Doctors.** March 17: The Norwegian duo **Röyksopp** specializes in downtempo electronica. March 18: What the earnest Los Angeles rock quartet **Lifehouse** lacks in edginess it makes up for in mainstream radio accessibility.

JOE'S PUB

425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—March 11: **Les Nubians.** The sisters Hélène and Celia Faussart, who were raised in Bordeaux (with a brief sojourn in Chad), reconfigure American hip-hop and jazz with a severe Continental chic. The pair are in town with songs from their sophomore release, "One Step Forward." March 15: The Canadian turntablist **Kid Koala** serves up a funky mix of raucous rhythms. March 17: **Natalie MacMaster,** a Cape Breton fiddler.

KNITTING FACTORY

74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—March 12: **Kelly Joe Phelps,** a lapsed jazz guitarist who now plays acoustic country blues. His slide work smolders, and the loose, cooled-ash quality of his voice brings an eerie quality to both his original lyrics and his classic-blues covers. March 15: The **Loser's Lounge** assembles to pay tribute to Van Morrison. March 17: **Black 47,** named after a bleak year in the nineteenth-century Irish potato famine, rings in St. Patrick's Day.

MERCURY LOUNGE

217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—March 14: The bawdy Irish rocker **Joe Hurley.** March 15: Fronted by the hard-edged Afro-topped vocalist Lisa Kekaula, Los Angeles's **Bellrays** bring soul to the garage-rock revival. If it seems as if they've mastered all the tricks of their forebears (that'd be everyone from the MC5 to James Brown), chalk it up to their experience—they've been at it for nearly a decade now. With the **Star Spangles.**

OTTO'S SHRUNKEN HEAD

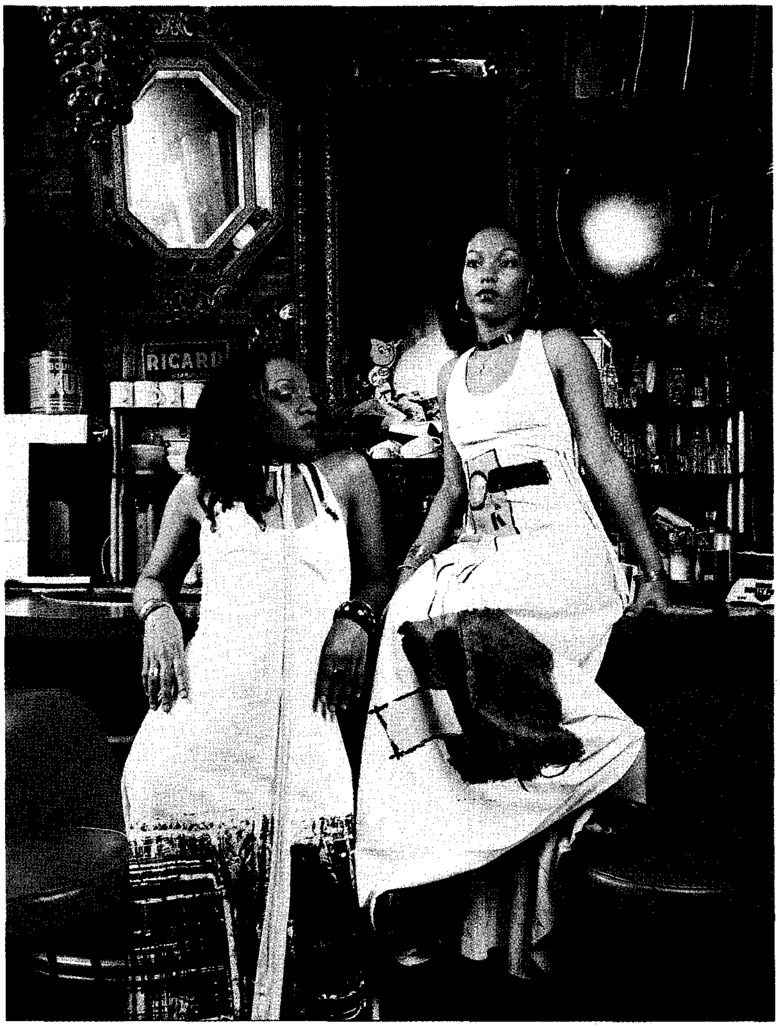
538 E. 14th St. (212-228-2240)—The **Moonlighters** are a charming local band (two singers, two ukuleles, an upright bass, and a steel guitar) with a penchant for swinging Hawaiian tunes from the twenties and thirties such as "Hula Blues" and "Honolulu March," along with a few originals in the same style. They're here keeping folks warm on Thursday nights.

SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY

360 W. 53rd St. (212-765-6299)—This garden-level watering hole has no doorman outside, no velvet rope, and no sign. The only indication that you are at the right place is a small green lamp. The long and narrow space is minimally decorated (with sculpturally displayed photographs and a skeletal sculpture), but the attentiveness of the staff and such luxe touches as fresh flowers (which belie the associations that are brought to mind by its name) make it the perfect place for a short romantic stay.

S.O.B.'S

204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—March 12: **Les Nubians** (see Joe's Pub). March 18: The San Francisco-based **Triple Threat** d.j. ensemble—featuring Shortkut and Apollo (formerly of the Invisibl Skratch Piklz) and Vinroc—sets up shop for a night of backward-looking, forward-thinking tracks from its new album, "Many Styles." Dining.



The Continental hip-hop of Les Nubians, at Joe's Pub and S.O.B.'s.

ERIN PATRICE O'BRIEN

SOUTHPAW

125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—March 18: The **Bellrays** (see the Mercury Lounge).

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND

130 W. 3rd St. (212-777-7745)—March 13: Gritty Irish rock with the **Prodigals.** March 14: After leading the beloved country-rock band the Mavericks and, most recently, singing for the Latin-rock supergroup Los Super Seven, **Raul Malo** is out on his own. March 15: The perennially affable **NRBQ,** one of the longest-running, most versatile bar bands to ever heed requests shouted from the audience, returns to New York.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL

59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—It's quite the journey from Boggy Depot, Oklahoma, to the Algonquin Room, but **KT Sullivan,** a knowing interpreter of the Great American Songbook, has travelled that unlikely trail, recasting classic material along the way. She's at work on the songbook of Harold Arlen through April 12. Dining.

BIRDLAND

315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—March 13-15: The pianist **Cedar Walton** has a touch of Clark Kent, a touch of Superman: beneath his mild-mannered surface is a jazzman of steely power and intelligence. He's also a terrific composer and an exacting bandleader. With a trio, his renowned improvising ought to gleam. Sundays: The **Chico O'Farrill Afro-Cuban Jazz Big Band.** The composer and arranger Chico O'Farrill, one of the grand architects of Afro-Cuban music, may no longer be with us, but his practiced big band is under the sure hand of O'Farrill's son Arturo, himself a dynamo of a pianist. Mondays: The **Toshiko Akiyoshi Jazz Orchestra.** In keeping her big band afloat for four decades now, the extravagantly inventive pianist, composer, and arranger Akiyoshi has defied all the odds and then some. The ensemble is always packed with skillful and inspired soloists; Akiyoshi's husband, the tenor saxophonist and flutist **Lew Tabackin,** is a dependable feature. Dining.

BLUE NOTE

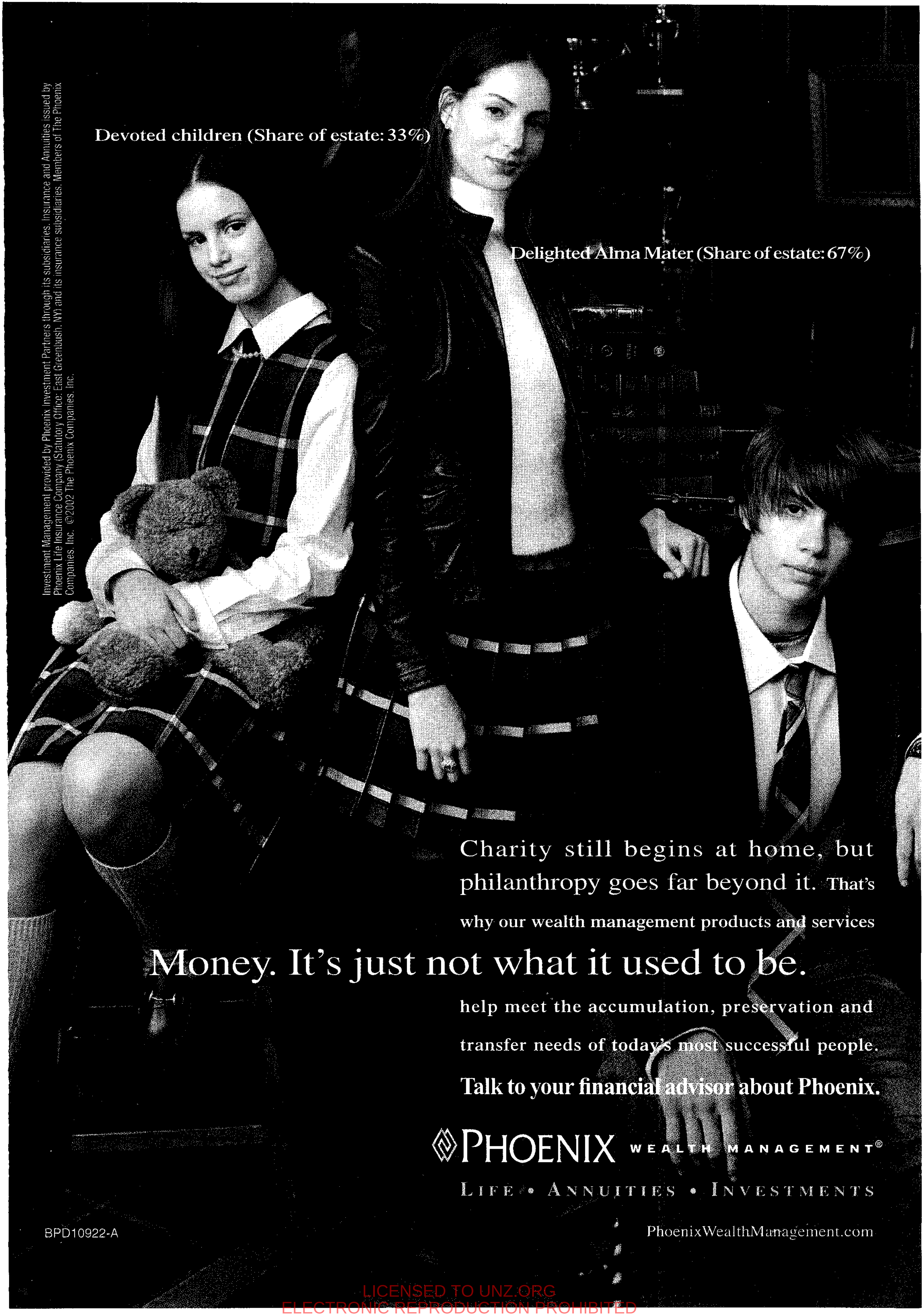
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through March 16: Like his fellow septuagenarian drummer Elvin Jones, the seventy-eight-year-old **Roy Haynes** still plays with the brilliance and drive that made him a legend decades ago. The saxophonist **Joshua Redman** is the guest at Haynes's birthday celebration, but the spotlight never really leaves the percussion phenomenon.

CAJUN

129 Eighth Ave., at 16th St. (212-691-6174)—It's not as if **Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks** are obsessed with the music of the twenties and thirties—they've even been known to slip in a number or two from the forties. Manning the most unwieldy of instruments (bass, tuba, bass saxophone) as well as a bulbous vintage Kellogg microphone, Giordano leads a tuxedo-clad twelve-piece band whose ease with early jazz and swing breathes life into an overlooked era. Authenticity and affection, rather than nostalgia and affectation, are what power this valuable and enjoyable ensemble. They're here on Mondays and Thursdays. The rest of the week features combos fluent in Dixieland jazz and other improvisational sounds of New Orleans.

CARLYLE HOTEL

The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through March 15, **Rita Coolidge.** By the end of this decade every one of your favorite, or not so favorite, seventies pop sensations will have become a cabaret performer. Coolidge, she of the agreeable voice and deep musical associations with Joe Cocker, Kris Kristofferson, and others, is a case in point. On Mondays the café is home to **Woody Allen and the Eddie Davis New Orleans Jazz Band.** ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Loston Harris** is in attendance.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IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through March 16: The **James Carter** band. Judging from the company he's keeping for this gig, the saxophone wizard Carter is planning to immerse himself deep in the funk, with the help of such bedrock groovers as the organist **Dr. Lonnie Smith** and the guitarist **Rodney Jones**, as well as the formidable trombonist **Steve Turre**. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul**.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—March 11-16: Now in its second year at this club, the **Jazz Composers Collective Festival** brings cheer to a heartless winter, if only by reassuring us that smart and ambitious jazz players are still out there. In a week of possibilities, every night brings a different, visionary band (or bands). Take your pick from Ben Allison & Medicine Wheel and Michael Blake's Elevated Quartet on opening night, the Ron Horton quintet and the Frank Kimbrough trio on March 12, Kimbrough's trio and quintet on March 13, Allison's Peace Pipe and the Herbie Nichols Project on March 14, and Blake's Eulipion Orchestra on March 16. You can't lose. Dining.

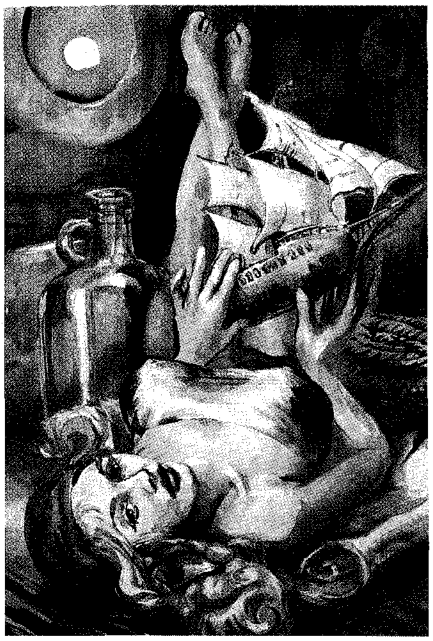
JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—March 13: War, inequality, and the abuse of authority are also on **Nora York's** mind these days; unlike most of us, though, this daring vocalist and conceptualist is able to turn her ruminations into fascinating musical explorations. Her latest, "Power/Play," uses Bob Dylan's "Masters of War" as its jumping-off point; York is sure to take it to parts undreamed of.

NOLITA TAVERN
30 Spring St. (917-237-1901)—Sundays in March: **People Like Us** returns, featuring more of leader Joel Forrester's piano work and compositions, both of which fashion a marvellous mélange out of resources scoured from throughout jazz history, all enhanced by Claire Daly's lustrous baritone sax.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Whether he's curating ambitious musical programs at Columbia's Miller Theatre, supporting singers and fellow-instrumentalists, or leading his own ensembles, the pianist **Eric Reed** has certainly found plenty to do with himself since leaving the Wynton Marsalis womb five years ago. He settles in here through March 16 with his septet, a small group with the mind of a big band. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—With all the modern-art temples in New York, it's surprising that the mid-career retrospective of the German photographer Thomas Struth should land in the house of Dendur. On one hand, it's an obvious match: Struth is best known for exquisite large-scale portraits of stately museums thronged with visitors. But the show is an unexpected leap into the twenty-first century for the Met, which has also installed a pair of Struth's video portraits in the Great Hall. The main retrospective intermingles series of vacant city streets, intimate family portraits, lush green jungles, and museum scenes. Hanging in the inevitable retail nook at the end of the show, in what may be a curatorial dig at the recently shuttered Guggenheim branch in Las Vegas, is a stunning image of a pirate's cove at a casino. The second floor features a smaller exhibition, devoted exclusively to Struth's street photographs. Through May 18. ♦ The staggering riches of **"Leonardo da Vinci, Master Draftsman"** make it clear that art was an expedient profession for a man of boundless drives. In all fields, he anticipated what unknown things, once they became known, would probably look like. His aesthetic research went straight to ultimate effects of sublime beauty—but strangely, he seemed to have no personal use for it. One is struck by the contrasting human warmth of drawings by Leonardo's teacher Andrea del Verrocchio and by some of his pupils and other followers. Leonardo wasn't exactly cold, but something more intimidating: indifferent. (Add modern irony to his temperament, and he would be Marcel Duchamp.) His strangulated heart found grisly relief in contemplating war, natural disasters, and the grotesque. Through March 30. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)



"Stow Away" by Don Doe, at Kamm.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—Even what's wrong with **"Matisse Picasso,"** the magnificent show that deploys a hundred and thirty-three works by the twin godheads of modern painting, is revelatory. It is a double-barrelled blast of an exhibition with a popgun thesis: that Picasso and Matisse goaded and influenced each other. So do most artistic contemporaries. In any case, trying to absorb fine curatorial points of comparison between such stunners as Picasso's "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon" and Matisse's "Bathers with a Turtle" is like trying to check the oil in a speeding truck. The show's payoff comes from the jagged, overwhelming sense it gives of how different the two were as men and artists—as antithetical, and evenly matched, as Ali and Frazier. Through May 19. (Open Thursdays, Sundays, and Mondays, 10 to 5, and Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 9.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle"** attempts an apotheosis of the artist. Frank Lloyd Wright's bobbin turns cornucopia, brimming with the fruits of Barney's epic nine-year "Cremaster" project: all five spectacular, recondite films projected amid outlandish objects, photographs, drawings, decorative elements such as flags and artificial turf, and, along the ramp, runnels of congealed Vaseline. It's all oddly, numbingly earnest. There's nothing fake about Barney. Would that there were. A touch of the charlatan (or of humor, God forbid) would prove that he cares what other people think. As it is, the show is seamlessly hermetic: a solipsist's houseparty. Barney's achievement appears to be a richly upholstered dead end. But to miss this landmark event is unthinkable. If not a major artist, he is certainly

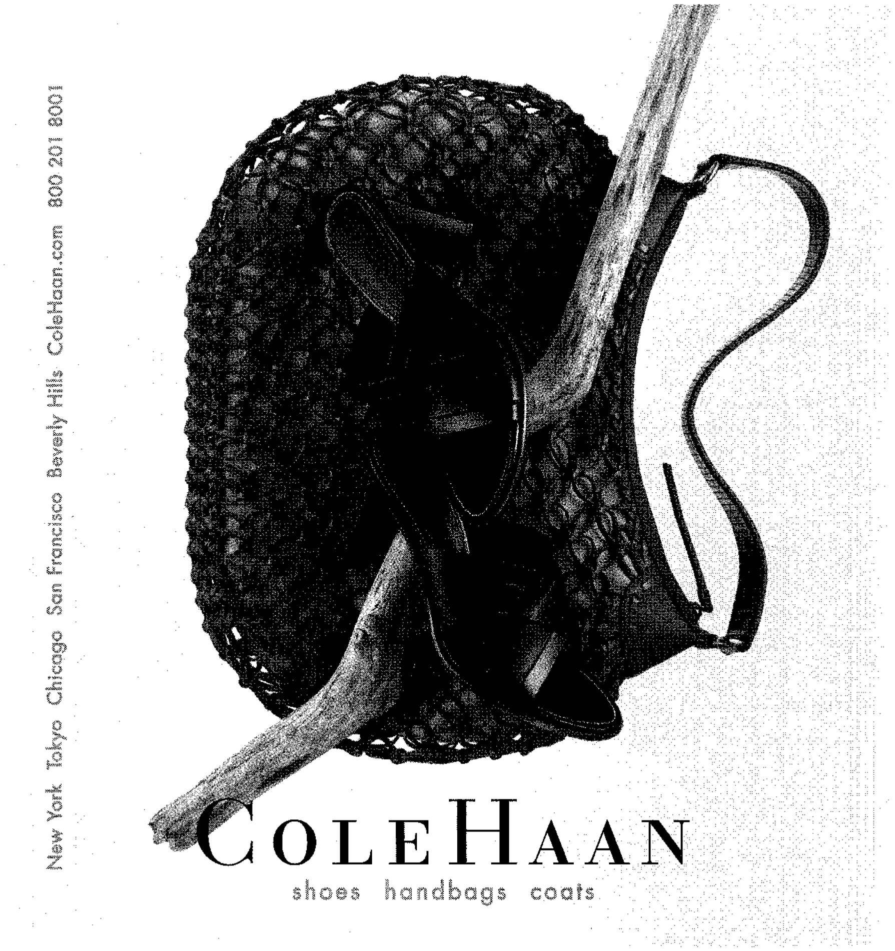
a major case. Through June 11. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—The twenty-six-year-old Ryan McGinley obsessively photographs the nights and days of his friends and lovers on the Lower East Side. Presented unframed and mounted in obligatory large format, the color pictures are so achingly hip that you have an urge to resist them, but their immediacy and zeal win out. There's nothing surreptitious about McGinley's gaze, and his portraits look more like collaboration than documentation, from the red-headed nymph who slyly eyes the camera as she's caught mid-leap to the man on the verge of orgasm who stares at the camera disconcertingly stone-faced. Through May 18. ♦ **"Scanning: The Aberrant Architectures of Diller + Scofidio,"** a retrospective featuring the designs of the husband-and-wife team. Through May 25. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-369-4880)—**"Edwin Dickinson: Dreams and Reality"** is a retrospective of the works of a strange American painter who died in 1970 at the age of eighty-seven. Dickinson's exposure to modern-art ideas in his early, New York years was fitful. His youth was beset with tragedies, including the deaths of his mother, his brother (by suicide), and his best friend. He lived in Provincetown on Cape Cod for most of his career, making fantasy-ridden, strenuous paintings that are at times vaguely Cubist or Surrealist and always aggressively unhappy. Gloom ruled him, except in lovely dashed-off landscapes that he called "premiers coups" and drawings that demonstrate first-rate skills. Self-portraits display a bearded, grim New England mariner type, face clenched around inexpressible pain. Through April 13. (Open Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 5, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN
1 Bowling Green (212-514-3700)—For ten years the anthropologist Alicia Gonzalez and the photographer Roberto Ysáis have travelled to the Mexican state of Oaxaca to interview the native people and document the sacred rituals included in **"The Edge of Enchantment."** Some of the rites are familiar (the Day of the Dead), some are not (a Huamelula ceremony in which the town marries an alligator, the bride dressed in a white gown with a muzzle in place of a veil). The fascinating photographs and videotapes are organized by generic geographic categories: bays, rivers, mountains, and valleys, with an unexpected detour to New Jersey (in a section on emigration to "El Norte"). Through July 20. ♦ Japan has its Living Treasures, and Mexico's Fomento Cultural Banamex has recently instituted a similar program, identifying a hundred and eighty-one living masters of traditional folk arts. In **"Great Masters of Mexican Folk Art,"** more than five hundred works by these artisans are displayed, from brilliantly painted ceramics to dazzling embroideries and gleaming silver. Items are arranged according to their materials, allowing comparison between different achievements in wood, wax, stone, tin, leather, beadwork, paper, and glass. Among the most amazing entries are a group of doll-house-size chairs exquisitely carved from horn by Luis Felipe Murillo Carrillo and Carlos Chacón Gómez and a pair of gold-and-flower-encrusted Day of the Dead skulls by Wenceslao Rivas Contreras, which look like polychromed marble but are actually molded sugar. Through March 15. (Open daily, 10 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—A selection of late works by the Chinese artist Chen Zhen, who died in 2000 at the age of forty-five. Chen moved to Paris in 1986 but retained a passion for Chinese medicine, which explains all the sculpted kidneys, lungs, and spleens in materials such as colored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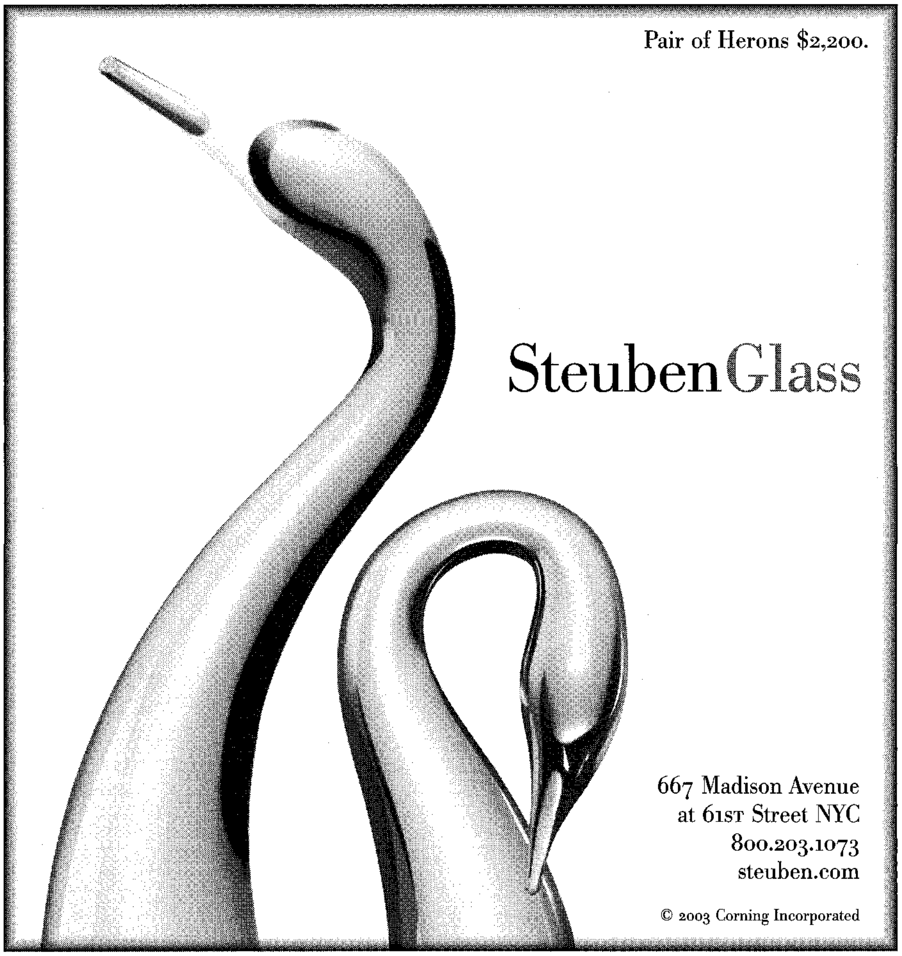
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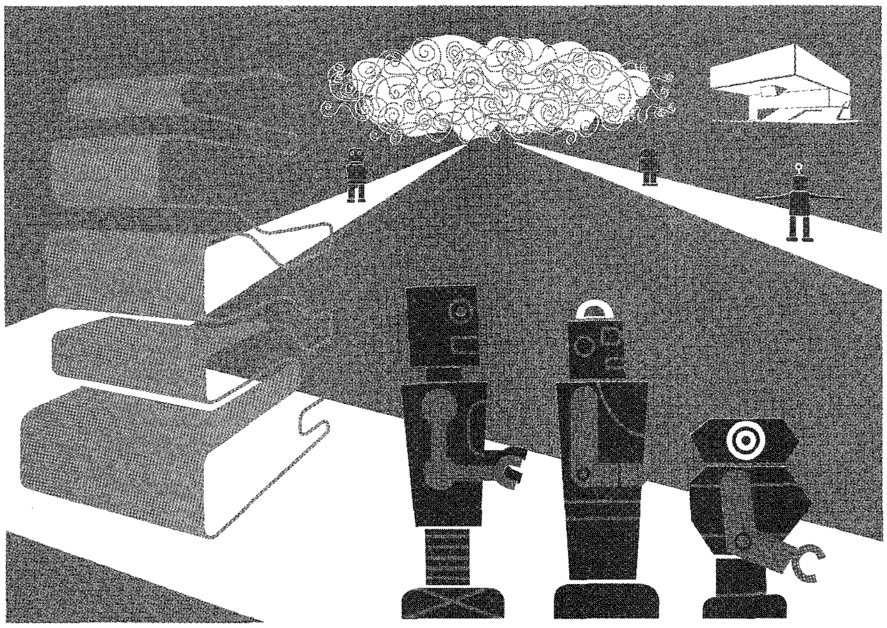
candles, blown glass, and alabaster. But the show's centerpiece is an installation of wooden beds and chairs, stretched with animal skins and arranged in a circle to form a massive drum kit, and viewers are invited to make a joyful noise for Chen. Through May 25. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

DIANA HOROWITZ / JOSEF ALBERS
The plein-air tradition lives on in these modest, lovely scenes of New York and Italy. Corot never saw New York Harbor, but he would have recognized—and admired—these quasi-panoramic views, where the magic is always in the middle distance. For delicacy and concision, not too many people can touch Horowitz. Downstairs, a roundup of prints by Josef Albers includes familiar color studies and some surprises. Wiggly graphic compositions from the forties show the Teutonic heavyweight in a Karin Davie mood. Horowitz through March 15; Albers through March 22. (Hirschl & Adler, 21 E. 70th St. 212-535-8810.)



SPACE CASES *The husband-and-wife architects Elizabeth Diller and Ric Scofidio are usually thought of as conceptual artists whose main subject is a critique of architecture and its bourgeois conventions, but their retrospective at the Whitney is so beautiful that you're inclined to rank them as architects first and social critics second. When they replicate the airport-security experience by assembling several hundred toy robots onto a moving conveyor belt, the effect is witty but somewhat obvious. What gives the installation its power is the way the robots' glass case looks as elegant, and as monumental, as anything designed by Mies van der Rohe.—Paul Goldberger*

RICHARD McGUIRE

ROBERT INDIANA
It's surprising that one of the most recognizable avatars of Pop art has languished so long in semi-obscurity. Now, with a series of number sculptures installed on Park Avenue, new paintings at Paul Kasmin in Chelsea, and this survey of classic works from the sixties, the LOVE master is set for a belated embrace. The only real obstacles are the works themselves, which remain hermetic, heavy-handed, and, for all their exit-sign legibility, a bit dull. Through March 29. (C&M Arts, 45 E. 78th St. 212-861-0020.)

ELIZABETH MAGILL
An Irish painter makes her New York début with moody landscape paintings that vacillate between a post-Richter aesthetic (the images are loosely based on the artist's snapshots) and standard-issue nineteenth-century sublime. The best canvases explore the hours of dusk and dawn, when tree line and roadside merge into one vast shadowy field, and the horizon is pierced by distant lights or a single lamppost. A glaring misstep is the occasional sequin pasted in the sky, which feels like Bob Mackie trying to muscle in on Caspar David Friedrich. Through March 29. (Artemis Greenburg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-445-0444.)

WILLIAM WOOD
Ribbons of some luminous, sheer ductile material swoop through Wood's paintings, whose grisaille recesses promote both wonder and peevishness. Admirers harp on about the mysteriousness of Wood's technique, but it's not so difficult to guess what's involved (squeegees, wax, a lot of wrist movement). What's trickier to figure out is their emulsion of gimmickry and artistry. Is Wood essentially a Lava-lamp formalist? Skeptics may find that his smooth, semigloss pleasures coat any grains of doubt in nacre. Through March 15. (Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 212-223-2227.)

Short List

MAY STEVENS
Mary Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. 212-397-0669.
Through March 22.

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

WILLIAM BAILEY
Many impenetrable still-lifes, plus vaguely Balthusian nudes of young women, by the arch-conservative realist, whose changeless style is an earnest of metaphysical conviction and/or paralysis. He renders shelves and tabletops of old-fashioned ceramic and metal vessels with slightly fuzzed precision in finely adjusted grays and earthen colors with decorative blue accents. Bailey's obsessively scrutinized vessels have more sensuous presence—sexiness, even—than his phlegmatic nudes, which isn't to say that they have much. Calendar art for people who don't care what year it is. Through March 15. (Robert Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 212-366-4774.)

DOUGLAS GORDON
It's not quite the greatest show on earth, but this enthralling three-part video installation gives the circus a run for its money with a trained Indian elephant and Gagosian's very big top. Gordon, a former winner of Britain's Turner Prize, filmed the pachyderm in the gallery as it obeyed the command to play dead. The artist's favorite themes of doubling (footage was shot in two circular pan shots, one clockwise, the other counter) and memory (it's an elephant, after all) recur in this alternately amusing and upsetting piece. One question remains: did the animal weigh as much as a Serra? Through March 29. (555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111.)

DONALD MOFFET
Painters from Vermeer to Warhol have relied on projected imagery. Moffet ups the ante and just leaves the projector running, overlaying videotape of Central Park onto monochrome canvases. (The scenes depict the Ramble, a gay cruising spot, signalled here by a single pair of shadows.) The landscape moves imperceptibly—tree branches sway slightly, leaves shiver in the wind—and the anticipation is palpable. Underpainting in bright red or blue peeks through the screens, as if to testify that these are paintings and not films, but the jury's out. Through March 15. (Boesky, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9889.)

CHLOE PIENE
The Connecticut-born artist might be video's answer to Liz Phair. "The Woods" is her intermittently beautiful slow-motion paean to the combative free-form dancing that metalheads do in mosh pits. In a second video, "You're Gonna Be My Woman" (the phrase comes from an exchange Piene had with a Texas convict), the artist herself appears as a sort of hyena girl, dressed in a filthy T-shirt and underwear. She snarls, vomits, smiles, lunges at the camera, and seems alluringly deranged. The show's weak link, drawings of elongated masturbating nudes labelled "CP," might be mash notes to Egon Schiele. Through March 22. (Gasser & Grunert, 524 W. 19th St. 212-807-9494.)

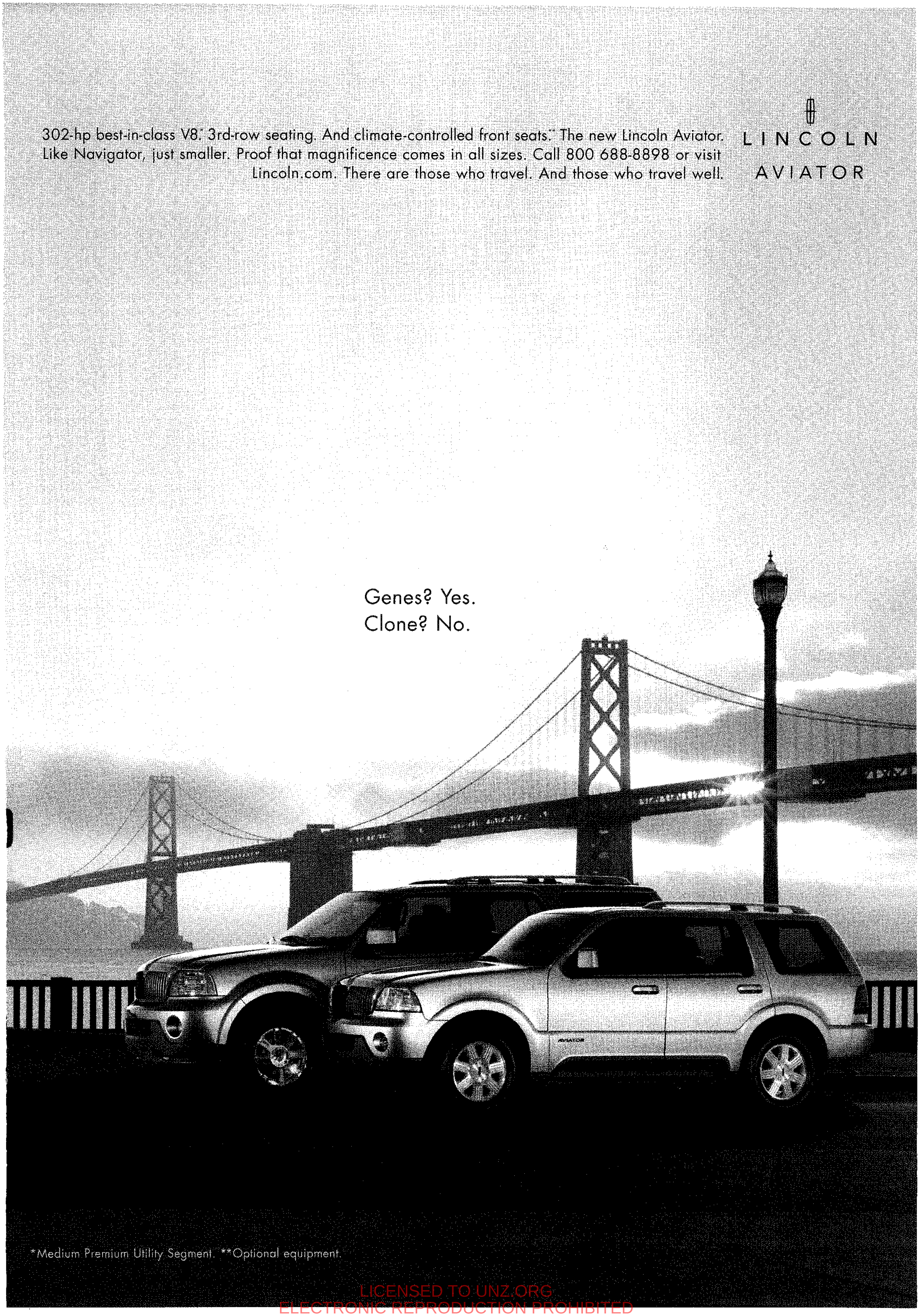
RACHEL WHITEREAD
The British sculptor stays true to her gimmick (casting negative spaces from the world) by presenting the solid form of a stairway and the rooms at its top and bottom. This colossal object, an off-white apparition in plaster-coated fibreglass, is eerie and extremely grand. Also in the show is a positive cast, in aluminum squares, of a dilapidated tile floor—an obvious riff on Carl Andre, but beautiful. Whiteread is often scorned for aping Bruce Nauman's sculpture of negative spaces from the sixties. When asked about this recently, Nauman said, "She's a good artist. I always knew there was more to that idea than I used." Through March 29. (Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 212-206-9100.)

OTTO ZITKO
Using nothing but a roller and red-orange paint, the Austrian artist has covered a high dome-shaped gallery in a manic lattice of loops and zags. The result is like a gorgeously vandalized chapel. Everywhere you look, kinked clutzy crimson lines switchback across the white walls. Zitko's method is a sort of high-octane scribblism, like Dubuffet with Alzheimer's. Nothing in Chelsea is more energetic or lovely. Through March 15. (Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

Short List

DON DOE
Kamm, 504 W. 22nd St. 212-807-0420.
Through March 29.

LUCIAN FREUD
Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200.
Through April 12.



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AND: A calendar of *New Yorker*
events across the country

MICHAEL DOMINICK
Rodgers 9W, 529 W. 20th St. 212-414-9810.
Through March 29.

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

ROBERT COLESCOTT
The old hipster Expressionist (he's seventy-seven now) shows more juicy, hotly colorful paintings that make high comedy of sensual and racial themes, with a difference. Colescott's always bravura paint-handling has been set free from cartoony designs, attaining a lush, skittery, entirely assured lyricism that stands up to de Kooning's. Images of African totems and loving couples come and go like illusions in summer clouds. Memorable colors include sizzling red, loamy black, and the noncolor of blank canvas, which Colescott employs with newfound dynamism. Through April 5. (Kind, 136 Greene St. 212-925-1200.)

Short List

PEARL BLAUVELT
K.S. Art, 73 Leonard St. 212-219-9918.
Through March 22.

GALLERIES–BROOKLYN

CHRISTOPH DRAEGER
Draeger's reconstruction of the Munich Olympic Village room in which the first live, televised hostage crisis began comes to Brooklyn straight from its German début. Amidst dirty cleats, "Mod Squad" paperbacks, and Marlboro butts, a period TV squawks news about the event (including crucial leaks of police-ambush plans) while a projector blinks reënactments of the doomed athletes and captors watching the same broadcasts. Through March 17. (Roebling Hall, 390 Wythe Ave., Brooklyn. 718-599-5352.)

SHIH CHIEH HUANG
"S-67-03," described as a "kinetic cause-and-effect system that interacts with the viewer," is a techie bricoleur's glowing, beeping fairyland of chemistry-set parts and jury-rigged gadgetry. A music-box soundtrack and a blinking overhead light set the scene for Huang's intricate webbing of colored electrical cords and clear hoses full of fluorescent fluids, which bubble and whirr erratically in response to movement around the gallery. Pour a cup of glowing liquid into the funnel by the door, and the machine yields the sort of noises that suggest the machine has a G-spot, if not a mortal soul. Through March 23. (Sixty Seven, 67 Metropolitan Ave., Brooklyn. 718-486-0387.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

INGAR KRAUSS
This Berlin-based photographer has tapped into that slightly surreal time in adolescence so controversially mined by the likes of Sally Mann and Jock Sturges, but without Mann's sense of intimate familiarity or Sturges's naked majesty. Krauss's German and Russian kids are clothed, more or less, photographed in black-and-white, and seem both entirely aware of the camera and resistant to easy interpretation. One girl in a party dress strolls through the woods using a bunch of balloons to obscure her face; another, in a leotard, mascara, and a tight bun of hair, boldly stares Krauss down. She might as well be daring Krauss to ask her how old she really is or if she's having any fun at all. Through March 22. (Marvelli, 526 W. 26th St. 212-627-3363.)

JAN STALLER
The massive, man-made found sculptures in Staller's new large-scale color photographs are so aggressively physical that they sometimes appear to be straining against the edges of the frame. In "Silage" an obese, lumpy snake of fabric-wrapped fodder crushes the grass beneath a broad gray sky. The effect is both menacing and oddly titillating, like an elaborate package you can't help but unwrap, even though you're aware that it houses a nasty surprise. Many of the objects are graceful despite their immobility. In "Ribbon Drawing—Korea," a twirled length of industrial ribbon jetés across a plot of dark, crumbly soil, and in "Tyvek Spools," a long bank of enormous spools trail silky-looking threads. They're as syncopated and graceful as a troupe of cancan dancers. Through March 29. (Klotz/Sirmon, 511 W. 25th St. 212-741-4764.)

CHRIS STEELE-PERKINS
The Beatles are often given credit for fathering England's modern youth subculture, but the Fab Four had a spectacular opening act: the teddy boys, loosely knit gangs of working-class youths united by their love of music, tight jeans, and extravagant, towering hairdos. The teddy-boy look was killed off by the frizzy hair and fringe of the hippies but was resurrected as part of the punk-rock aesthetic. A longtime Magnum photographer, Steele-Perkins captured all the energy and cool insouciance of the latter-day teds, and although it would have been easy to romanticize (or ridicule) the apparent confidence and outlandishness of his subjects, he managed to convey warmth without condescension. Through March 15. (Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. 212-431-0292.)

PAUL STRAND
Walking through this broad collection of Strand's lesser-known work, one is struck not only by the clean, well-composed timelessness of the images but also by how many imitations his eloquent, silvery black-and-white photos have inspired over the decades. Strand, a protégé of Lewis Hine, died in 1970, but many of the photos here—a lathe, soft as wax; a plant, its leaves made velvety by frosted dew—feel both iconic and fresh. Not everything in the show is as memorable, but one has only to look at an informal suite of tiny landscapes or the shadowy portraits of Strand's first wife to marvel at the photographer's gift for conveying the unexpected. Through March 15. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 212-334-0010.)

Short List

ANDRÉ KERTÉSZ
Bruce Silverstein, 504 W. 22nd St.
212-627-3930.
Through March 15.

THOMAS WERNER
Hawkins, 526 W. 26th St.
646-638-2883.
Through March 15.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

DOYLE
March 18 at 10 A.M.: A sale of furniture, decorations, and paintings that also includes a selection of prints, porcelain, silver, and rugs. (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.)

SWANN
March 13 at 10:30 A.M. and 2:30: A sale of books on bibliophily, the history of printing, and related subjects. Richard de Bury's "Philobiblon," the first English edition of the first published book on bibliophily (printed at Oxford in 1599), is a highlight of the sale. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

TRIPLE PIER ANTIQUES SHOW
The mother of all Gotham antique shows comes again to the far West Side, with more than six hundred dealers offering a plethora of fine art, antiques, and decorative objects from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. (Piers 88, 90, and 92, Twelfth Ave. between 48th and 54th Sts. 212-255-0020. March 15-16.)

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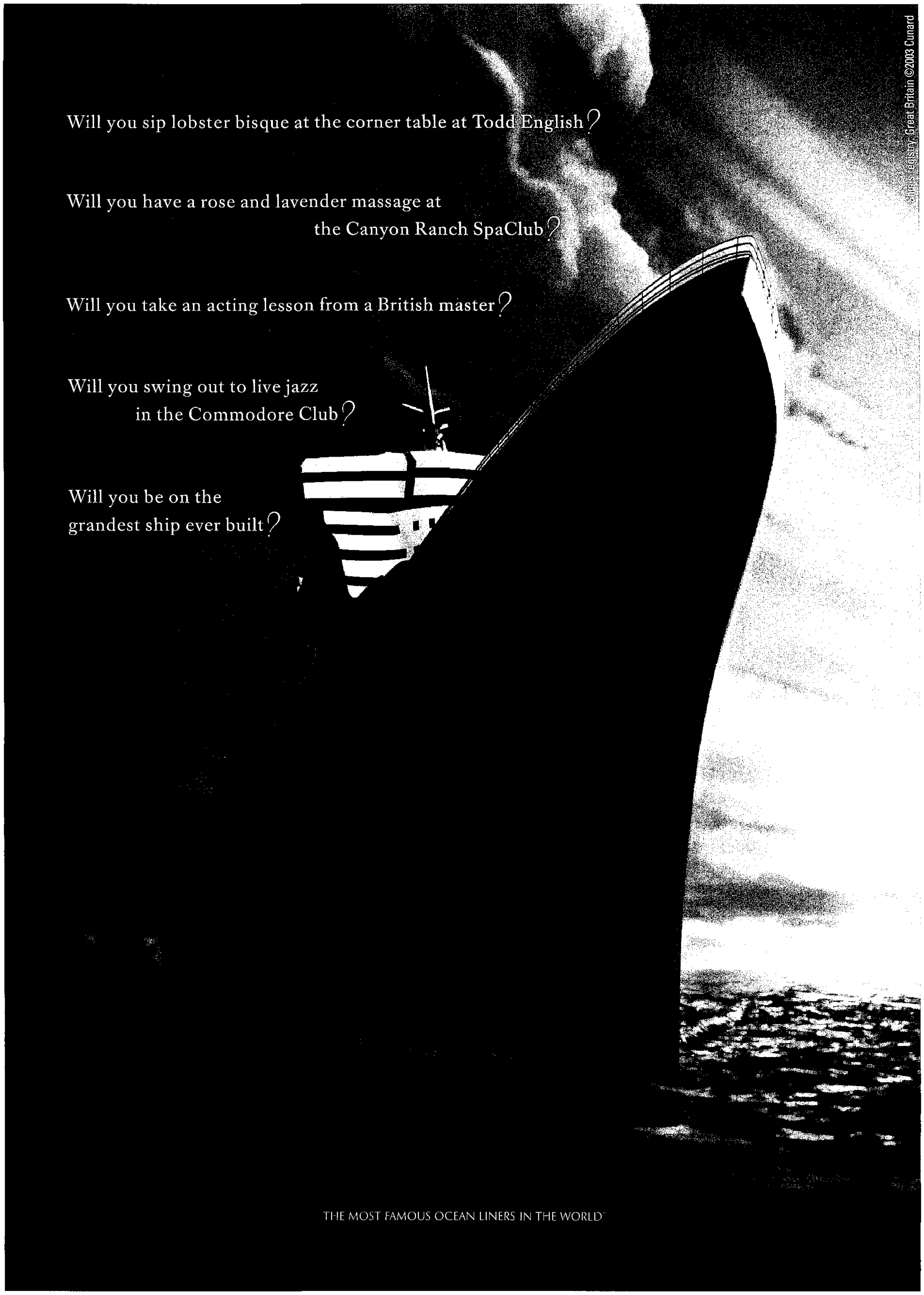
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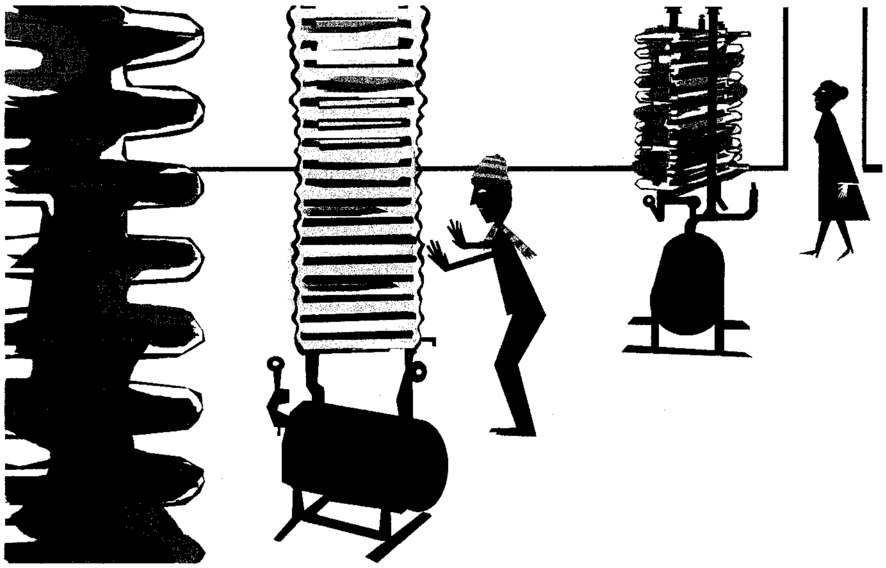

Michael Dominick's heat-generating sculptures, at Rodgers 9W (see Galleries—Chelsea).

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OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Franco Zeffirelli's production of **"La Traviata,"** with Ruth Ann Swenson, Frank Lopardo, and Lado Ataneli leading the cast; Bertrand de Billy conducts. (March 12 at 7:30 and March 15 at noon.) ♦ Harold Prince's 1990 production of Gounod's **"Faust"** has lost none of its astonishing ugliness in this refurbished revival, but you'll have a glorious time if you limit your attention to Roberto Alagna and Angela Gheorghiu, who transcend the frequent puffs of stage smoke and bring real fire to the fatal attraction between the deluded philosopher and the damsel who crosses his path. James Morris is a gruff and charmless Méphistophélès (how does the boyishly attractive Alagna put up with his company for so long?). The Met orchestra, conducted by Bertrand de Billy, wallows happily in Gounod's elegant gooeyness. (March 13 and March 18 at 8.) ♦ For a generation, Verdi's **"Otello"** has been the province of Plácido Domingo, who has met the title role's considerable demands with such presence and power as to scare virtually all rivals away. But Domingo himself has endorsed the candidacy of Vladimir Galouzine, who leads the cast of a very Russian revival of Elijah Moshinsky's production, conducted by Valery Gergiev; his co-stars include Kallen Esperian as Desdemona and Nikolai Putilin as Iago. (March 14 at 8.) ♦ The Met's new **"Les Troyens,"** the centerpiece of this season's citywide Berlioz bicentennial, may not get everything right, but a half-baked production of this awesome, uneven, and deeply moving masterpiece is still a feast. Ben Heppner has returned from vocal purgatory, singing the daunting role of Aeneas with considerable success; Deborah Voigt's Cassandra is hampered by some generic Wagnerian delivery, but the glowing strength of her voice shines through. (Michelle de Young replaces Lorraine Hunt Lieberson in the role of Dido.) Elena Zaremba, Matthew Polenzani, and Robert Lloyd distinguish themselves in smaller roles. The late Maria Bjørnson's set, as grand and glittering as the piece itself, is perhaps the best thing about Francesca Zambello's gimmick-prone production; James Levine conducts. (March 15 at 7.) ♦ Elijah Moshinsky's production of **"Nabucco,"** which made its triumphant début in 2001, returns to the house with most of its vital properties intact: Samuel Ramey once again brings his dark and vulnerable vocal gravitas to the role of the priest Zaccaria; John Napier's mammoth set evokes a Biblical grandeur; James Levine paces the score flawlessly; and the Met chorus, singing "Va, pensiero," compress themselves into the single, suffering character—the Jewish people—that Verdi demands. Andrea Gruber bravely takes on Abigaille, the most punishing female role in the Italian repertory; the other leads are Wendy White, Francisco Casanova, and Frederick Burchinal (as Nabucco). (March 17 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

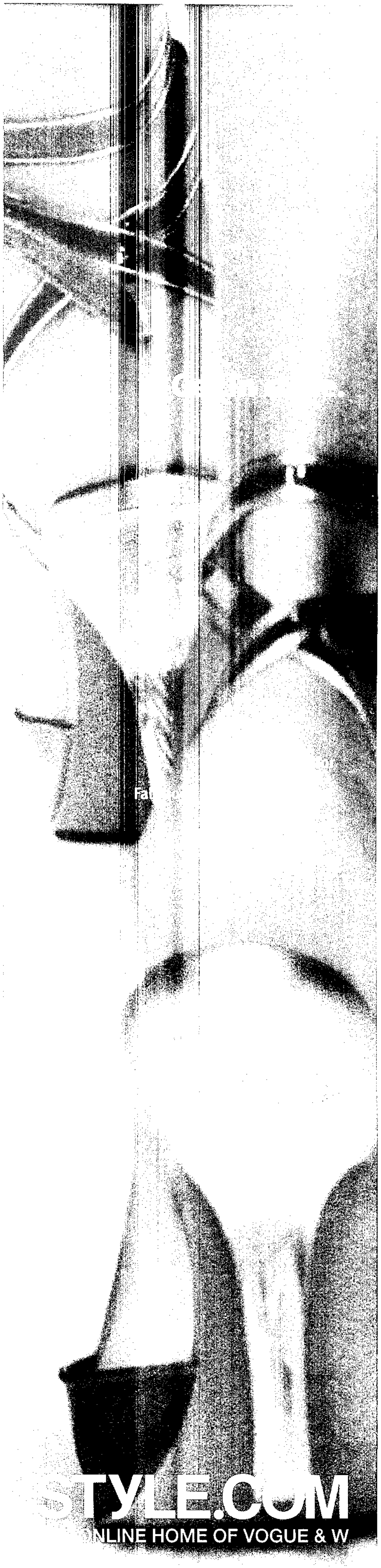
NEW YORK CITY OPERA
Gotham's essential second house is starting its spring season with a surprise, filling a revival of its 1990 production of **"A Little Night Music"** with an all-star cast of singing actors—including Juliet Stevenson, Claire Bloom, Jeremy Irons, and Marc Kudisch—that should take Sondheim's most beloved musical back to its Broadway roots. Scott Ellis directs, with choreography by Susan Stroman; the invaluable Paul Gemignani conducts. (March 12-14 at 8 and March 15-16 at 1:30.) ♦ Jonathan Eaton's production of **"Carmen"** returns to the house, featuring Katharine Goeldner (in the title role), Nicolle Foland, Carl Tanner, and Paulo Szot; Joseph Rescigno. (March 15 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 212-307-4100.)

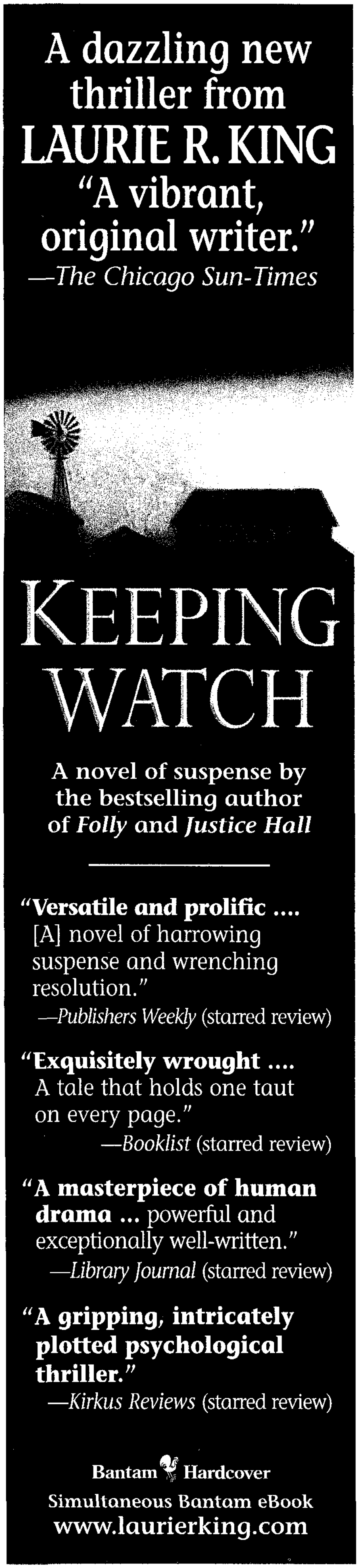
ENCOMPASS OPERA THEATRE: "APPROACHING INFINITY"
Nancy Rhodes, the company's artistic director, has conceived a double bill of one-act chamber operas, presenting the New York première of Hans Werner Henze's "The End of a World" (an absurdist opera first written for radio, in 1953) along with John Harbison's "A Full Moon in March" (a ritualistic setting of a W. B. Yeats dance play, from 1979). The performers include the mezzo-soprano Désirée Halac, the countertenor Derek Lee Ragin, and the dancer Kerry Stichweh; Kenneth Hamrick conducts. (Connelly Theatre, 220 E. 4th St. 212-206-1515. March 14-15 at 8 and March 16 at 3.)

AMATO OPERA
The feisty chamber-opera company, a monument of the Lower East Side, continues its run of Mozart's **"Così Fan Tutte."** Anthony Amato conducts. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. March 14-15 at 7:30 and March 16 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Pinchas Zukerman, who has not appeared with the orchestra in ten years, performs Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1 in G Minor on a program that also includes music by Harbison ("The Most

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Often Used Chords," a merry spoof of music-theory books) and Dvořák (the Symphony No. 7). David Zinman conducts. (March 12-13 at 7:30, March 14 at 11 A.M., and March 15 at 8.) ♦ Zinman conducts a "rush hour" concert of the Harbison and Dvořák works. (March 18 at 6:45.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Two monumental works—Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto and John Harbison's Requiem—fill the program for the last of the orchestra's three March concerts. The Beethoven, something of a potboiler, should be freshly revived by the lucid voicing and sonic elegance of the pianist András Schiff; the Harbison, a supreme effort by one of America's most gifted composers of vocal music, receives its New York première with the assistance of an exceptional crew of young singers (Christine Brewer, Margaret Lattimore, Paul Groves, and Jonathan Lemalu) and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus. Bernard Haitink conducts. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 12 at 8.)

VOICES OF ASCENSION
In a sure harbinger of spring, New York receives its first major performance of Bach's St. John Passion, offered by Dennis Keene's renowned professional chorus, with orchestra. The vocal soloists include Frederick Urrey (the Evangelist), Judith Pannill, and Steven Tharp. (Church of the Ascension, Fifth Ave. at 10th St. 212-358-1469. March 12 at 8.)

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: "MUSICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY"
Leon Botstein, the A.C.O.'s music director and philosopher-king, leads a program that explores the limits of musical narrative. Lehár's "A Vision: My Youth," a rare orchestral foray by the operetta master, is a nostalgic savoring of time past, while the "Asrael" Symphony by Josef Suk (Dvořák's son-in-law) is an anguished response to the death of the composer's wife. The big draw is the Schnittke Viola Concerto (with the bristling Kim Kashkashian as soloist), a postmodern masterpiece by a composer whose expressionistic polystylism was both a response to the strictures of Soviet life and a forceful affirmation of his Russian-German background. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. March 14 at 8.)

RECITALS

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER: "POINT/COUNTERPOINT"
In homage to Bach's "Art of Fugue," the Brentano String Quartet—the brainiest of the hot young American quartets—has commissioned short works from ten prominent composers, each designed to be interspersed between the leaves of canons and *contrapuncti* that make up Bach's supernal masterpiece. The palette is broad, including an "Intrada" by the Neo-Romantic Nicholas Maw, a work inspired by Indian raga by the serialist Charles Wuorinen ("Alap"), "Bach-Shards," an essay in deconstruction by Shulamit Ran, and Wynton Marsalis's "Fugue," a piece strictly based on Bach's Contrapunctus XII. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788. March 12 at 8.)

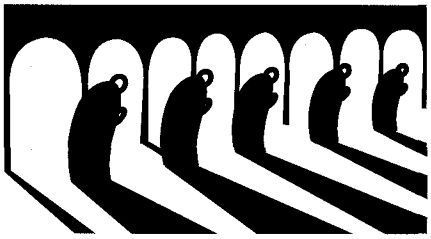
COSMOPOLITAN CHAMBER PLAYERS
The Players, a distinguished young group that includes the cellist Mark Kosower and the composer-pianist Lowell Liebermann, offer a program of instrumental works by two masters of song, Schubert (including the Piano Trio No. 2 in E-Flat Major) and, in an eightieth-birthday tribute, Ned Rorem ("Pas de Trois" and "Autumn Music"). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. March 12 at 8.)

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG: "SONGS OF PEACE AND WAR"
The Festival, in light of current events, has replaced its "Fatal Divas" program with a concert of music by a veritable United Nations of composers that includes Mahler ("The Little Drummer Boy"

BOOK CURRENTS

Away from It All

Ancient and isolated, the twenty Orthodox monasteries on the Greek peninsula of Mount Athos do not make the headlines often, but the current standoff between the conservative monks of Esphigmenou (motto: "Orthodoxy or Death") and other orders shines a light on this enclave, famous for its total exclusion of females (including livestock) and its extreme notion of solitude: some hermits still live for decades in caves with only the skulls of their predecessors for company. Graham Speake's history **MOUNT ATHOS** (Yale) suggests that the monks have always been a querulous bunch. As early as 972 A.D., the number of monks allowed to attend annual meetings was limited to "avoid the disorders and disputes which have occurred very frequently at these gatherings."


RICHARD McGUIRE

Few people nowadays are attracted to the cloistered life, but in some periods of history joining sacred orders was almost the norm. In Renaissance Europe, the high cost of marriage in aristocratic families sometimes sent the majority of a family's daughters to convents. In **A CONVENT TALE** (Routledge), P. Renée Baernstein focusses on the life of the sixteenth-century Milanese noblewoman Agata Sfondrati. Such was the dearth of marriage opportunities that Agata's sister Anna was the only woman in three generations of the Sfondrati to get married. Unsurprisingly, many women felt trapped by this life. Mary Laven's **VIRGINS OF VENICE** (Viking) looks at the many ways in which this frustration was vented—amateur dramatics, hospitality to outside women, and love affairs. A nun who, in 1614, knocked a hole in a wall to admit her lover pointed out that she had been at the convent since she was six or seven and that, when she took her vows, "I spoke with my mouth, and not with my heart."

—*Leo Carey*

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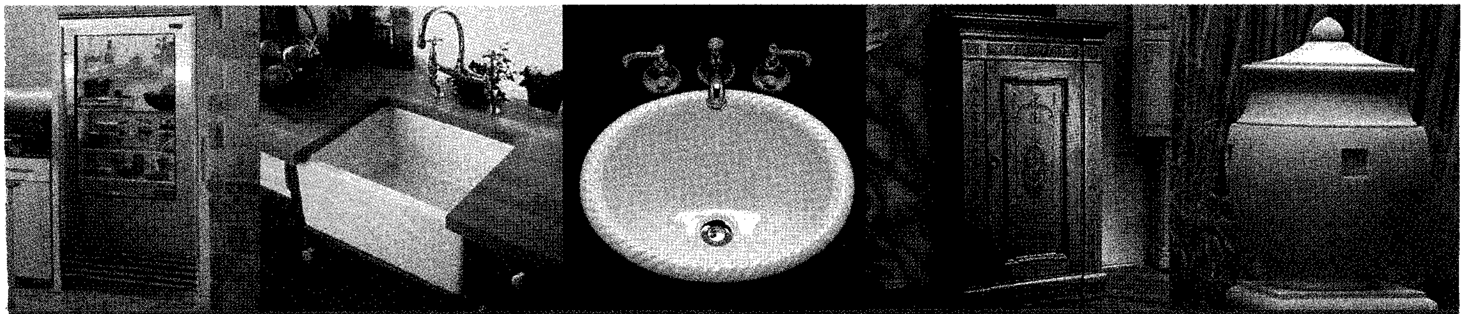

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THE LEADING DIRECTORY OF HOME DESIGN CHOICES

from "Des Knaben Wunderhorn"), Grieg, Blitzstein, Mussorgsky, Rorem, Duparc, and Tom Lehrer. Michael Barrett and Steven Blier accompany the mezzo-soprano Charlotte Hellekant, the baritone Darius de Haas, and others. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 212-772-4448. March 12 at 8.)

PRO MUSICIS SERIES: SONIA CHAN

The young Canadian pianist offers a New York début program of sonatas by Chopin, Berg, and Dutilleux. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 12 at 8.)

BARGEMUSIC

New York's only floating music festival returns from dry dock. March 13-14 at 7:30: The violinist Mark Peskanov, one of the series' trusty old hands (as well as its new director), teams up with one of its brash upstarts, the pianist Steven Beck, to play the first three of Bach's Sonatas for Violin and Keyboard. Beck goes it alone for Stravinsky's Serenade in A. ♦ March 15 at 7:30 and March 16 at 4: Mozart's Piano Quartets in G Minor and E-Flat Major (with the violist Mark Holloway and the cellist Yumi Kendell joining in) and Schoenberg's Two Piano Pieces, Op. 33 (some of his most delicately lyrical music), performed by Beck. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

"BULL & BYRD" FESTIVAL

John Bull and William Byrd were two of the great rebels of the English Renaissance—Bull for his scandalous behavior, and Byrd for his defiant, if quiet, adherence to the Roman Catholic faith. Two concerts at Cooper Union celebrate their music. March 13 at 7:30: Bull's output of keyboard music is just as brilliant, intricate, and unruly as was the man himself—which makes it perfect for the pianist Alan Feinberg, a leading interpreter of such relative pushovers as Milton Babbitt and Thelonious Monk. ♦ March 15 at 7:30: The music of Byrd, Bull's teacher and a man of steadier habits, is an exquisite balance of expression and form. Pomerium, the noted band of singers, sings a selection of his anthems, motets, and secular songs. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. 212-279-4200.)

ETHEL: THE STRING QUARTETS OF JULIA WOLFE AND JOHN ZORN

In the second of three concerts, downtown's hippest string quartet combines music by Zorn and Wolfe ("Four Marys") with world premières by Randall Woolf and Todd Reynolds (the ensemble's first violinist). (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. March 13 at 8.)

PRISM SAXOPHONE QUARTET

The late William Albright, like his better-known Ann Arbor colleague William Bolcom, was a composer (and keyboard specialist) who reinvented the European tradition of the composer-virtuoso by injecting it with the raw strength of American pop culture—especially ragtime, a genre they both helped to revive in the nineteen-seventies. But since Albright's music—shadowy, private, and more rigorously intellectual—has long been the moon to Bolcom's sun, this superb sax group's tribute concert is a welcome event. The "Fantasy Études," one of Albright's seminal works, is the highlight of a collaborative program with the pianist Marilyn Nonken and the bass clarinettist Michael Lowenstern. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 12 W. 69th St. March 13 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

"SOUNDS FRENCH" FESTIVAL

The best of new French music comes to New York for a monthlong festival, unified by a commitment to the timeless Gallic values of rationality and refinement. For a complete listing of concerts, see the festival's Web site at www.soundsfrench.com. Some highlights: March 14 at 8: The downtown performance space Engine 27 hosts the first of three events celebrating the music of the wide range of composers who have worked at the Groupe de Recherches Musicales (G.R.M.), Paris's nerve center for *musique concrète* and acousmatic music since 1948, including Pierre Schaeffer, Pierre Henry, Messiaen, Xenakis, and many others. (137 Franklin St. Tickets at the door.) ♦ March 15 at 2: Lili Boulanger's Impressionistic "Nocturne and Cortège" is a prelude for contemporary works by Bruno Mantovani ("Appel d'Air"), Tristan Murail, and others, in a concert by the St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble. (Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St. 212-594-6100.) ♦ March 15-16 at 8: The Guggenheim Museum's "Works and Process" series presents a concert portrait of Marc-André Dalbavie, a composer of partially American extraction whose music, more directly accessible than that of his colleagues, is gaining a foothold with American orchestras. The musicians include the countertenor Jean-Paul Fouchécourt and soloists from the Orchestre de Paris. (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3587.) ♦ March 16 at 4: In the first of two concerts, Olivier Latry, who released an acclaimed recording of Messiaen's complete organ music last year, presents a tour through the extraordinary French repertory for his instrument, including works by Messiaen, Alain, Dupré, and Thierry Escaich. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 212-288-2520.) (Through March 27.)

"ON WINGS OF SONG": KERI ALKEMA

Alkema, a young American mezzo-soprano, makes her New York recital début under the auspices of the Marilyn Horne Foundation, performing an all-American program of Argento, Pasatieri, Lori Laitman, and Elinor Remick Warren. (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. 212-734-2130. March 16 at 3.)

SARAH CHANG AND LARS VOGT

The playing of Chang, a violinist of stunning technique and incandescent sounds, should make an interesting pairing with Vogt's darker and more intricate pianism. The two young stars collaborate in sonatas by Franck, Ravel, and Saint-Saëns. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. March 16 at 3.)

ALEXANDER FITERSTEIN

Young Concert Artists presents a recital of Poulenc, Messiaen, and Brahms (the Clarinet Quintet) by the young clarinettist, assisted by the pianist Ken Noda and the Borromeo String Quartet. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-307-6656. March 17 at 7.)

NATHAN BERG

The young Canadian bass-baritone makes his New York recital début with songs by Mussorgsky, Mahler (the "Rückert Lieder"), Ibert ("Chansons de Don Quichotte"), and Vaughan Williams. (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. March 17 at 7:30.)

ALTENBERG TRIO

The young Viennese ensemble, named for the poet Peter Altenberg (and in residence at the Musikverein), plays piano trios by Haydn, Schubert (the Trio No. 1 in B-Flat Major), and Werner Pirchner at the Frick Collection. (1 E. 70th St. 212-288-0700. March 16 at 5.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY CHAMBER PLAYERS

The Players, not to be left out of the city's Berlioz bicentennial, offer the song cycle "Nuits d'Été" (with the mezzo-soprano Désirée Halac) along with music by d'Indy, Ravel, and Poulenc (the Sextet). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. 212-799-1259. March 17 at 2 and 8.)

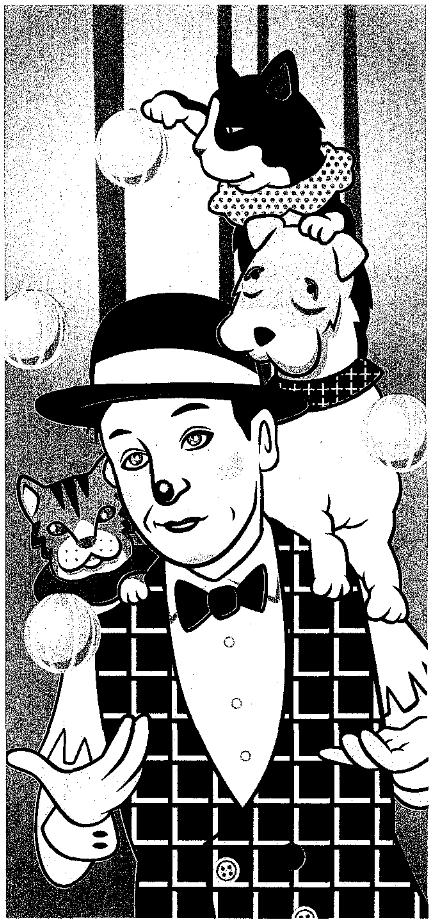
ABOVE AND BEYOND

COMEDY & PET THEATRE

The owner of a newly adopted cat or dog typically welcomes the pet home by watching it lick a few faces and occasionally chew up an expensive pump. Not so for Gregory Popovich, a former Moscow Circus performer, one of the world's top jugglers, and a practiced clown. Popovich provides a home for two dozen or so cats and dogs (all of which were rescued from animal shelters), teaching them to jump through hoops, swing on bars, and walk on their hind legs. He then takes them to places that most pets can only dream of—"The Tonight Show," Las Vegas, and the Tribeca Performing Arts Center. (199 Chambers St. 212-220-1460. March 15 at 1:30.)

READINGS

March 12 at 7: Peter Cameron, Raphael Rubinstein, and Roberta Allen read from their work as part of "Prose in General," a series that explores the intersection between literary and visual arts. (Art in General, 79 Walker St. 212-219-0473.) ♦ March 14 at 7: Giles Milton offers passages from "Samurai William: The Englishman Who Opened Japan." (South Street Seaport Museum, 213 Water St. 212-748-8735.) ♦ March 16 at 6: The poets Amy Holman and Stephanie Strickland share their recent verse. (Barbès, 376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn. No tickets necessary.) ♦ March 18 at 7: Edmund White and Joyce Carol Oates read from works in progress. A video-based light show created especially for the event by artist Kim Sooja will also be on display. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext.11.)

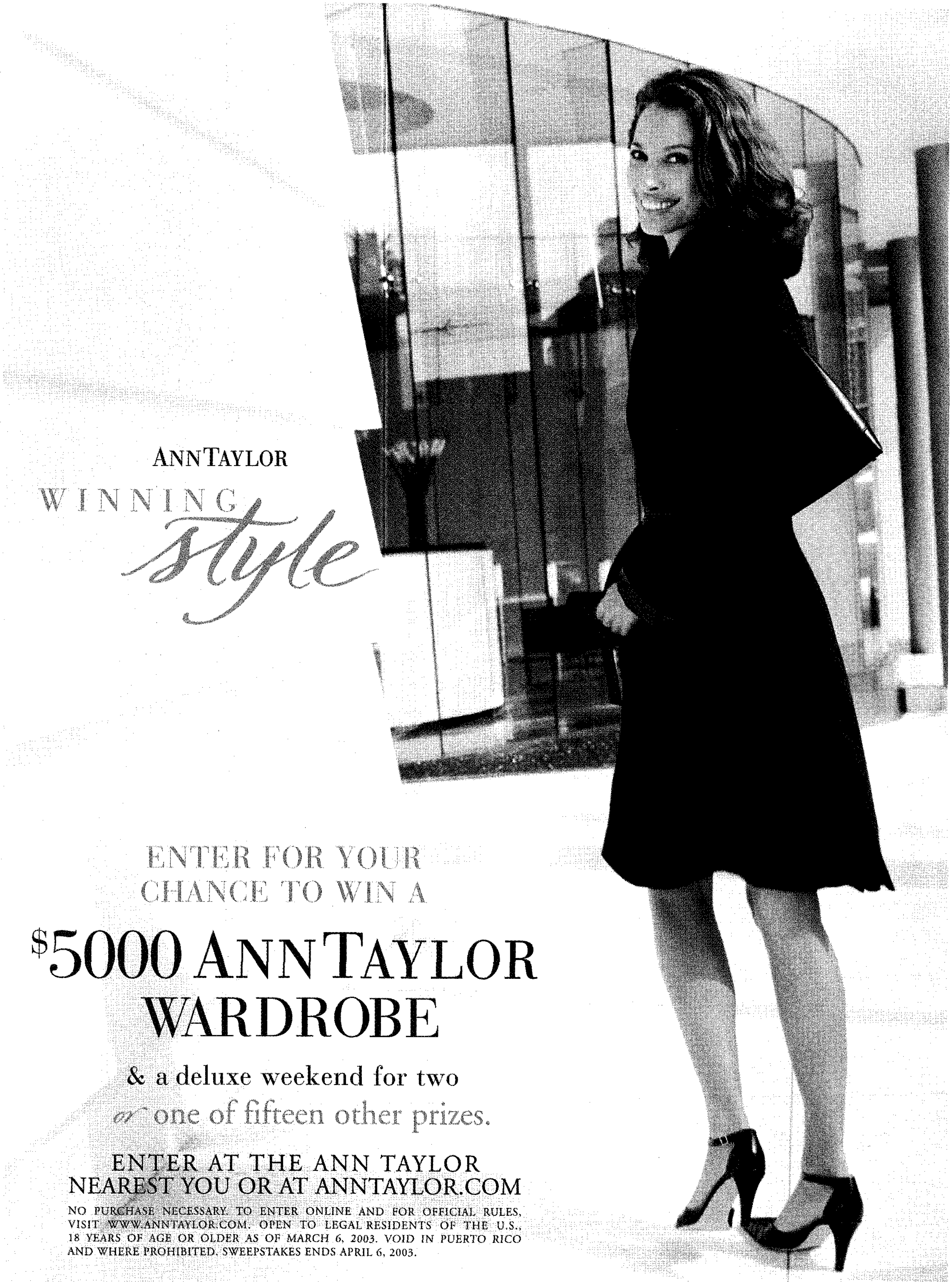


Comedy & Pet Theatre, at the Tribeca Performing Arts Center.

MICHAEL WELDON

TALKS

March 12 at 5:30: Dr. Ronald G. Crystal delivers an illustrated lecture titled "Therapy for the New Millennium: Using Genetic Medicine to Regenerate Diseased Organs." (Science, Industry, and Business Library, Madison Ave. at 34th St. 212-592-7000.) ♦ March 13 at 7: Stanley Kunitz discusses Paul Celan and the poetry of the Holocaust. He will be introduced by Galway Kinnell. (Vanderbilt Hall, New York University, 40 Washington Sq. S. For more information, call 212-254-9628.) ♦ March 15 at 10 A.M.: Gabe Bartalos, a prosthetics specialist and makeup artist, talks about creating the characters in Matthew Barney's "Cremaster" films. The program concludes with a live demonstration in which one of those characters will be re-created. (Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3587.) ♦ March 18 at 6: The historian Jeffrey A. Kroessler discusses the evolution of New York City libraries. (Donnell Library, 20 W. 53rd St. For more information, call 212-886-3742.)



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MOVIES OPENING

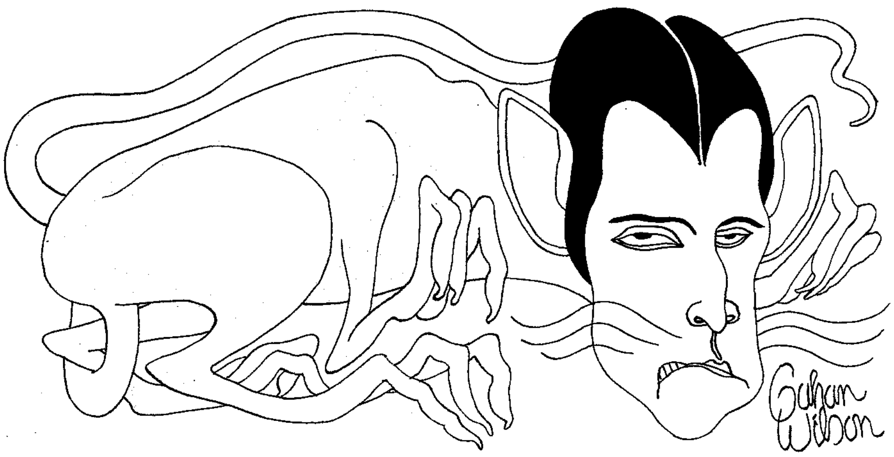
BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM
Gurinder Chadha wrote and directed this comedy in which an Indian teen-age girl in London joins a soccer team against the wishes of her traditional parents. Opening March 12.

THE HUNTED
A retired Special Forces instructor (Tommy Lee Jones) gets called in by the F.B.I. to track down one his former students (Benicio Del Toro) who has killed two men in Oregon. Directed by William Friedkin. Opening March 14.

JOURNEYS WITH GEORGE
The video diary of Alexandra Pelosi, a network-television producer who followed George W. Bush's 2000 Presidential campaign. Opening March 14. (Quad Cinema.)

PLATFORM
Jia Zhang-Ke directed this drama about an amateur theatrical company, set in 1979, when China was moving away from Maoist rule and embracing Western influences. In Mandarin. Opening March 14. (Cinema Village.)

SPUN
Jason Schwartzman ("Rushmore") plays a crystal-meth addict looking to score, in the début film from the music-video director Jonas Akerlund. The cast includes Mena Suvari, Brittany Murphy, and John Leguizamo. Opening March 14.



Crispin Glover in "Willard," opening March 14.

UNDER THE SKIN OF THE CITY
A portrait of a working-class mother of four, living in Tehran during the time of Iran's 1997 general elections. Rakhshan Bani-Etemad directed. In Farsi. Opening March 14. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinemas.)

WILLARD
A withdrawn office clerk (Crispin Glover) keeps pet rats that do his bidding, in this remake of the 1971 horror film. Glen Morgan directed. Opening March 14.

FILM NOTES

ALL THE REAL GIRLS
For his follow-up to "George Washington," the young director David Gordon Green has turned his gaze upon a quiet mill town in North Carolina. You can tell the place is quiet because Paul (Paul Schneider) enjoys a reputation as its most carousing and cavalier stud. In fact, Paul is a nondescript time-waster of twenty-two, a blunt boy whose best friend is really his mother (Patricia Clarkson). Having tasted and discarded half the local womenfolk, Paul is nonplussed when he finds himself falling for, and then two-timed by, Noel (Zooey Deschanel). Green presents this as an education of the heart, a lyrical act of persuasion that is backed up by random shots of sunsets and tumbling creeks. To the rest of us, it looks like comeuppance. Why the sweetly unreadable Noel should hang around the place a minute longer is anybody's guess.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 2/17 & 24/03.) (Angelika Film Center.)

CHICAGO
The time is the nineteen-twenties, but the setting is so stylized, so shamelessly grounded in a hundred other shows and films, that "Chicago" barely qualifies as a period piece; indeed, it merrily jabs at the celebrity-lust of our own era. Catherine Zeta-Jones is Velma Kelly, and Renée Zellweger is Roxie Hart. Each is a man-killer, and each resides in jail, plotting her defense with the silken legal help of Billy Flynn (Richard Gere). The music and lyrics by Kander and Ebb operate on the old-fashioned principle that every song should be a showstopper, regardless of whether the show should be stopped. The director, Rob Marshall, cuts away furiously during every song, and this chronic wish to glance aside makes us wonder: could the performers not weather the camera's unstinting gaze? The only player to conquer the movie is Zeta-Jones, who gets by on a full tank of unleaded oomph. The film has punch, but it never really conveys the delicious, redeeming sense that life can be lived on the hoof.—*A.L.* (1/6/03) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, Cinema 2, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

CITY OF GOD
Just how far into your face can a movie get? This one has every intention of leaving you scalded and bruised. Set in Rio de Janeiro, it was directed by Fernando Meirelles, who tries every trick known to cameramen: freeze frames, whip pans, multiple dissolves, slow motion, double motion, any kind of motion. The object is to keep pace with his characters, the young and dispossessed of the Brazilian slums. The movie hastens roughly from the nineteen-sixties to the eighties, as we watch the boys either die or grow old before their time. The result is a jolting ride, but such is the skill on show that we run the risk of being too exhilarated to notice every death; does the film convince in its plea for the forgotten poor, or are we encouraged to forget them as they fall? In Portuguese.—*A.L.* (1/20/03) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, New York Twin, and 62nd & Broadway.)

CRADLE 2 THE GRAVE
The rap soundtrack is booming, the explosions plentiful, and the dialogue minimal. This hip-hop/kung-fu heist film pairs the talents of the martial-arts master Jet Li and the rapper DMX. Li's stunts are always memorable (especially the controlled fall from balcony to balcony) and DMX's one-note macho-man performance jibes with the no-nonsense direction.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

DAREDEVIL
Ben Affleck is a blind lawyer who becomes a superhero at night, and much of this new comic-book spectacular is so dark that you can't see it. Not that you're missing anything. What can be seen is derivative, flat, and halfhearted. Dressed in a maroon jumpsuit, Affleck tries for a light-voiced, unemphatic presence, and he registers no more powerfully here than he did in "Pearl Harbor." He seems a put-on movie star, a lazybones puffed by helium bursts of publicity.—*David Denby* (3/3/03) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

DARK BLUE
Another tale of crooked cops, this one set in 1992, at the time of the Rodney King verdict. Kurt Russell, his good looks puffy and slumped, plays a Los Angeles police veteran who has been promoted to lieutenant by dint of dogged persistence. His partner (Scott Speedman) is learning the ropes of corruption, while the squad's boss (Brendan Gleeson) has been tangled up in them for years. The screenplay is adapted from a James Ellroy short story; we get the Ellroy smell of moral rot, but none of his momentum—these errant souls spend so much time bewailing their predicament that the cracking of crime feels like a passing hobby. Only in the last half-hour does the movie, like Los Angeles itself, ignite. Ron Shelton, the director, picks up the pace as Russell scrambles through the inferno of the King riots.—*A.L.* (2/17 & 24/03) (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

DAZED AND CONFUSED
It's the last day of school, summer 1976, and a bunch of seniors are pondering their futures and getting ready to thrash their juniors. Richard Linklater's 1993 movie has no particular hero or heroine; the director is too democratic for that, and his camera glides around offering moments of heroism, or bliss, to all the characters in turn. This is a great time-capsule movie—Alice Cooper and Thin Lizzy on the soundtrack, womb-shaped plastic chairs, and the flap of flared jeans—but it's far more than that. With his endless gags and crisp, glowing images, Linklater has come up with a dramatization of good will.—*A.L.* (Sunshine Cinema; March 14-15.)

GERRY
Two guys called Gerry (Casey Affleck and Matt Damon) get lost in the desert in Gus Van Sant's homage to nothing happening at all, Beckett-style. After misfires like "Psycho" and "Finding Forrester," it's good to see Van Sant back on firmer, independent footing. The two actors trudge endlessly, searching for a way out of their sun-dazed nightmare, and they occasionally break the desolate silence with improvised banter. The movie is filled with shots like an extended closeup of the two Gerrys walking quietly side by side, their heads bobbing in rhythm. Stupor eventually sets in, but it's like being covered in a warm blanket.—*B.D.* (Village East Cinemas.)

HORNS AND HALOS
The cautionary tale of the writer J. H. Hatfield, who wrote a biography of George W. Bush entitled "Fortunate Son." The designed-for-controversy book claims that the President was arrested for cocaine possession in 1972, but it's essentially a toothless clip

GAHAN WILSON

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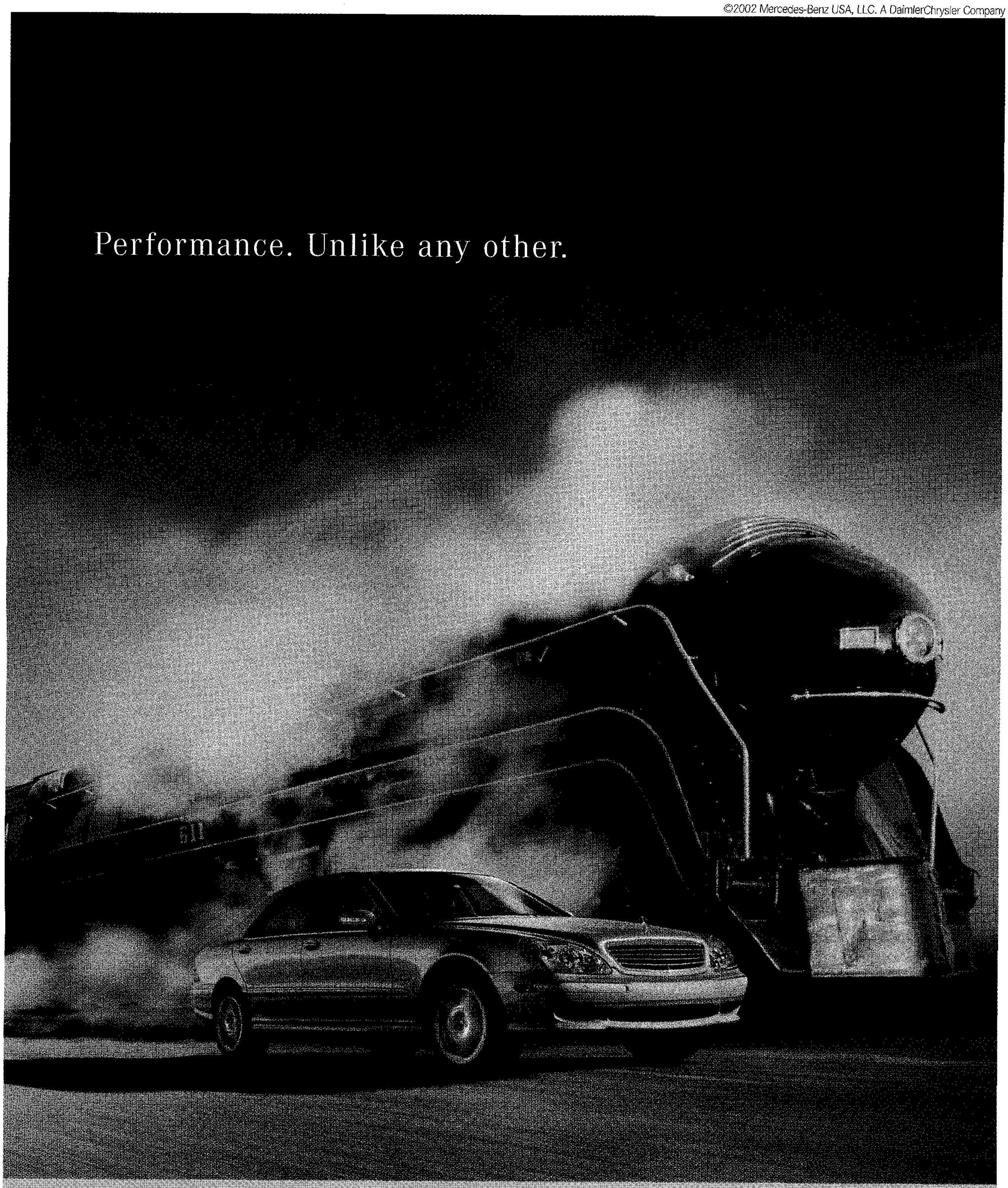
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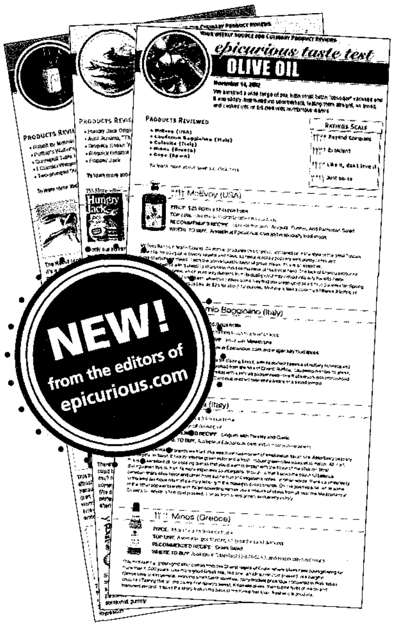

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job. The real story of this documentary concerns the efforts of the underground publisher Sander Hicks of Soft Skull Press to republish "Fortunate Son" after the original publisher, St. Martin's Press, discovered that Hatfield was a convicted felon and pulled the book from stores. As the allegations mount, the film becomes a fascinating study of the takedown of a media pariah.—*B.D.* (Cinema Village.)

THE HOURS

It has to overcome an over-all morbidity, a fractured time sequence, and Philip Glass's intrusive, chiming score, and, amazingly, it does. Stephen Daldry directed this adaptation of Michael Cunningham's prize-winning 1998 novel, from a script by David Hare. They've fashioned a lovely, serious work—as good as any recent "literary" movie—devoted to two themes, the variety of human bonds, especially the bond of love, and the gift that the dying make to the living. Nicole Kidman gives a revelatory performance as Virginia Woolf, both in 1923, at the time of writing "Mrs. Dalloway," and in 1941, when she loaded her coat with stones and walked into a river. Julianne Moore is a depressed Los Angeles housewife in 1951, and Meryl Streep plays a contemporary New York literary editor who hopes to give a party for a poet friend (Ed Harris) dying of AIDS. The widely separated episodes fit together as surely and lightly as dancers in a Balanchine ballet.—*D.D.* (12/23 & 30/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

IRREVERSIBLE

A thoroughly nasty piece of work, though not an empty or a foolish one: the director, Gaspar Noé, gives every sign of careful cleverness. His film tells of a young couple (Monica Bellucci and Vincent Cassel) who make love, go to a Paris party, and leave separately. She is raped and beaten; he pursues the assailant and takes what he believes to be revenge. The whole story runs backward, beginning with death and violation and rewinding to a nice afternoon, a bright white screen, and the joyful strains of Beethoven. The irony is pure acid: any pleasure that we meet later in the film is spoiled and scarred by the events of the first half, which are not so much irreversible as unwatchable. The trouble is that the picture has fallen victim to its own reputation; from here on, despite the seriousness of Noé's intentions, he will be known as the Man Who Showed Too Much. In French.—*A.L.* (3/10/03) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, and New York Twin.)

JOHNNY GUITAR

In Jean-Luc Godard's "Pierrot le Fou," the hero allows his maid to go to the movies three times in one week because Nicholas Ray's "Johnny Guitar" is playing: "It's good she's getting the right education," he informs his wife. For the rest of us, Ray's baroque, haywire "adult" Western is good for a laugh. Erotic tension and angst, circa 1954, invade the Old West landscapes, and the mixture makes the movie spectacularly incongruous. Joan Crawford stars as Vienna, the owner of a frontier casino bar. She wants the railroad to cut through the territory of the bad guys—a gang of range-riding plutocrats. But the true reason for all the movie's rampaging is that Emma (Mercedes McCambridge), the local Ms. Big, is a sexually repressed banker who's jealous of Vienna's animal magnetism. Ray's barrelling pace—and his penchant for pulp words and pop icons—must have been what impressed Godard. Even Crawford's leading men have gaudy monikers: Sterling Hayden is Johnny Guitar and Scott Brady is the Dancin' Kid. One strums, the other two-steps.—*Michael Sragow* (Gramercy Theatre; March 14.)

LAUREL CANYON

After the solemnities of "High Art," the director Lisa Cholodenko has turned to lighter matters: specifically, what to do if your mother is an unreconstructed hippie. Sam (Christian Bale) takes his fiancée, Alex (Kate Beckinsale), home to California to meet his mom, Jane (Frances McDormand), a record producer whose walls of photographs bear testament to a life misspent in rock. She is all the family that Sam has but far more than he wants, and the movie watches tenderly over their time together. Jane's idea of family values is to come within an inch of seducing her son's girlfriend, bringing a shameless young rock star (Alessandro Nivola) along for the ride. The movie has poise and a lightly perspiring sexiness, but also an uncertain sense of humor, and you end up rooting for the squares—especially Sam and his colleague Sara (Natascha McElhone), who have more fun in the front of a Volvo than seems either practical or legal. The soundtrack is full of ersatz British pop, so tuneless and squally that it could almost be the real thing.—*A.L.* (3/10/03) (Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

THE LIFE OF DAVID GALE

A hyper-articulate and, at times, heartfelt movie, but a mess nonetheless. Kevin Spacey stars as a philosophy professor and anti-death-penalty advocate who winds up on death row in Texas. Laura Linney plays his academic and protest-movement colleague, whom he allegedly raped and murdered. Kate Winslet turns up as an ace investigative reporter from New York who finds the last-minute evidence that may exonerate him. Some of the academic atmosphere is knowing and fun, and Spacey and Linney have a couple of lovely scenes together, but the thriller mechanics of the movie (it's plotted against a clock) insult the audience. At the climactic moment, Winslet's rented car stalls like a dumb burro, and she has to run through what appears to be the entire state of Texas. Alan Parker directed, and the script was written by an ex-philosophy professor, Charles Randolph. The filmmakers' point of view regarding the death penalty is so confusing that no two sane people could agree on what it might be.—*D.D.* (3/3/03) (Battery Park 16, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE LUSTY MEN

This 1952 movie beautifully captures the excitement and tawdriness of the rodeo circuit despite a thin, self-defeating story. Robert Mitchum stars as a beat-up ex-champ who coaches a talented rookie (Arthur Kennedy) and falls in love with the man's wife (Susan Hayward). At times the picture resembles a "Golden Boy"-style boxing drama, with the rodeo as the place poor cowpokes go to make a killing and instead get killed or corrupted. Fortunately, the director, Nicholas Ray, doesn't moralize too heavily. The audience gets caught up in the competition, and Mitchum's earthy, casual authority carries some threadbare scenes.—*M.S.* (Gramercy Theatre; March 14.)

OLD SCHOOL

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE PIANIST

Roman Polanski's drama about the survival of a real-life Polish Jew, the pianist Wladyslav Szpilman (Adrien Brody), during the grim days of the Holocaust is a movie that has been perfectly produced. The sense of scale and detail is exact, and the violence is neither exaggerated nor minimized but presented with clear-eyed accuracy. Yet this is not a work of great originality or imagination. Its protagonist lacks depth, and the theme of survival through hiding is, by its very nature, redundant. The playwright Ronald Harwood adapted the 1946 book that Szpilman wrote about his experiences without attempting to open up the hero at all. Is he ashamed, defiant, guilty? Grateful for his luck? We haven't a clue. His survival is an anomaly, a mistake, a joke—and that may be why the story appealed to Polanski. Shot largely in Warsaw.—*D.D.* (1/13/03) (Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE QUIET AMERICAN

The second adaptation of Graham Greene's novel, and, on the whole, a more successful effort than Joseph Mankiewicz's, of 1958. Michael Caine may lack the defeated nobility that Michael Redgrave brought to the role of the hero—a British journalist named Fowler—but few can beat Caine when it comes to the sad and the seedy. What is more, he squares off beautifully against Brendan Fraser. With his fine if bumbling manners, and the earnest thickness of his spectacles, Fraser is ideal as Pyle, the young do-gooder who, almost despite himself, winds up doing harm. The two men share a love for a young Vietnamese woman (Do Hai Yen), and the

Vanessa REDGRAVE Brian DENNEHY
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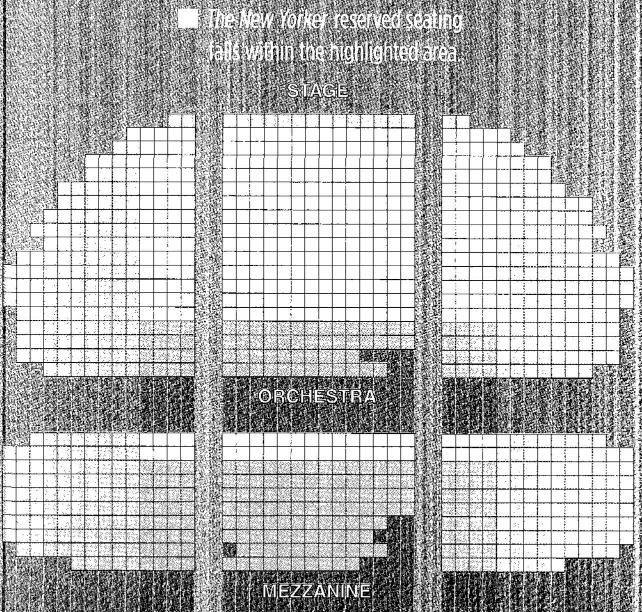
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director, Phillip Noyce, manages not to whack us too hard with the symbolic weight of their rivalry. Greene fans, a prickly bunch at the best of times, will pick holes in the movie, but Christopher Doyle's camera, slithering through the rooms and battlegrounds of an alluring land, takes us as close as we could wish to the heart of the matter.—*A.L.* (12/2/02) (Cinema 3, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE RECRUIT

Colin Farrell, the young Irish actor, has dark, hurting eyes, stubble on his upper lip and chin, and a slender, lithe body. He can't miss as a star, and he gives promise of knowing what he's up to as an actor. He's also the only interesting thing in "The Recruit," yet another paranoid thriller. This one is about training for the C.I.A., and it also stars Al Pacino in his domineering-satanic mode, complete with an opera-house Mephistopheles beard and glittering eyes. The Australian-born filmmaker Roger Donaldson has always been a competent director, but he doesn't have the wit to rise above a bad script, which, in this movie, leaves the unfortunate impression that the recruits are training less for intelligence work than for future appearances in action movies.—*D.D.* (1/27/03) (Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

THE SAFETY OF OBJECTS

A good cast can't save this pretentious movie about suburban lives of quiet desperation. Glenn Close, Dermot Mulroney, Patricia Clarkson, Kristen Stewart (the androgynous girl from "Panic Room"), and others say silly, overthought things to each other, and seem unable to start their cars without having some sort of epiphany. The director Rose Troche adapted the stories of A. M. Homes, and, as is the case in a lot of short-story movies, the connections between characters feel too contrived to land with any impact.—*Michael Agger* (First & 62nd Street Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

SHANGHAI KNIGHTS

Owen Wilson, not yet a bankable movie star, and Jackie Chan, not ready for retirement, return for a second round of D.I.Y. stunts and business-casual wisecracks in this sequel to "Shanghai Noon." In other words, the very definition of pointless fun. Chan seems to have recovered fully from his recent run-in with Jennifer Love Hewitt, and Wilson can make even a dopey hat seem funny. To complete the trilogy, the two should make "Shanghai School" and play kung-fu gym teachers.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

SPIDER

Patrick McGrath adapted his own novel about the muddled mind of a schizophrenic, Dennis (Spider) Cleg. As directed by David Cronenberg, the film is an emotionless exercise in audience patience. While Spider (Ralph Fiennes) mumbles around recalling the madness of his childhood, the viewer must discern what's real from what's delusional. The anemic Oedipal puzzle (the mother is played by Miranda Richardson, who, at times, morphs into Spider's landlady and his father's murderous girlfriend) unwinds tediously and Cronenberg's precise, desolate camerawork only adds to all the artful numbness.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center.)

TALK TO HER

In Pedro Almodóvar's odd but touching romantic drama, two very different men are drawn together by a common task: taking care of women who have fallen into a coma. Benigno (Javier Cámara), a shy, seemingly asexual young male nurse, looks after Alicia (Leonor Watling), a beautiful ballet dancer. Marco (Darío Grandinetti), a fortyish Argentine writer, becomes the lover of a fierce, long-waisted female bullfighter (Rosario Flores). After she is gored in the ring, she never speaks again. Both love affairs are touched by fantasy. Almodóvar's point appears to be that you can't have love without fable—that every love affair is an improbable narrative wrung from non-being and loneliness. The movie is shot in a new, subdued style for the director: past and present flow together, and everything seems touched with a melancholy magic. Two ballets by the choreographer Pina Bausch are

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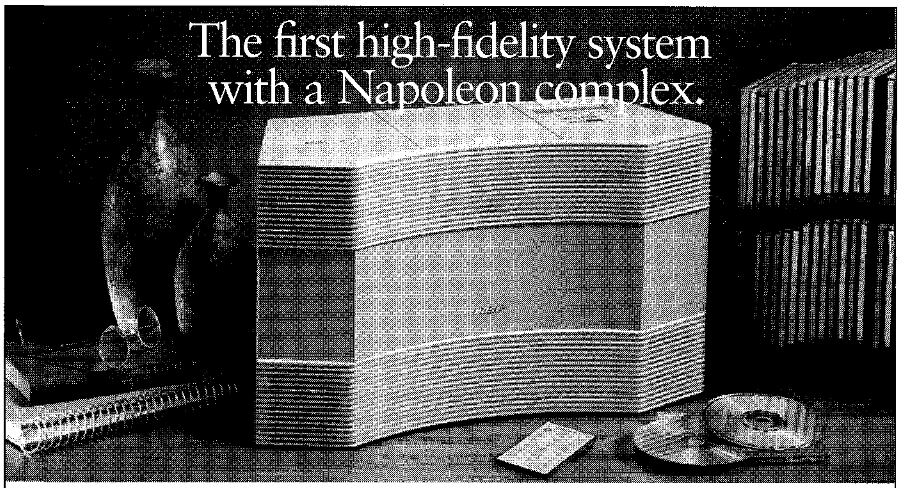

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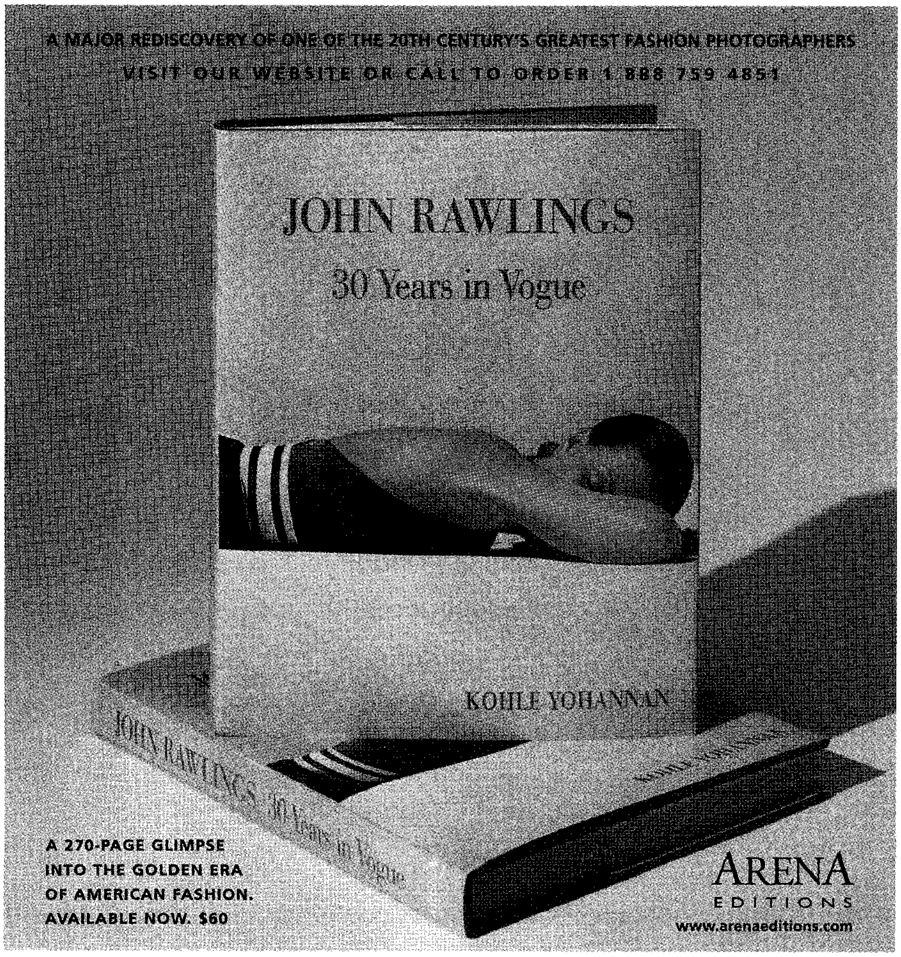

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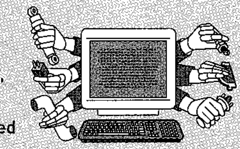

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integral to the film's themes. In Spanish.—*D.D.* (11/25/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)

TEARS OF THE SUN
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

TEN
When last we saw the Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami, he was capturing the songs of Ugandan street children with his digital video camera, delighting in the portability and intimacy of the new technology. In this revelatory film, he reverses course and fixes his camera to the dashboard of a car driven by an unnamed, beautiful divorcée (Mania Akbari) through the streets of Tehran. (The camera faces inward.) It's a postmodern gesture, a movie seemingly without a director, a drama that's also a documentary: the streets are real, the conversations scripted. The talk centers on the corseted lives of women in modern Iran, and Kiarostami's minimalist methods enhance a palpable sense of lives choked with frustration. Ironically, for a film about hidden women, the natural performance by Amin (Amin Maher), the ten-year-old son of the divorcée, reveals the most about their situation. In Farsi.—*M.A.* (Film Forum.)

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THE SPRING MOVIE MATRIX

As usual, the biggest film event of late winter isn't even a movie, it's a television show. The Academy Awards arrive on Sunday, March 23, with Steve Martin as host, and no one except two accountants knows whether or not "Chicago" will take home the most statuettes. Either way, it's sure to be a big night for sequins. In the weeks following the ceremony, the movies should improve along with the weather. Spring is traditionally the time when the major studios place their more speculative bets and smaller films can find some breathing room at the cineplex.

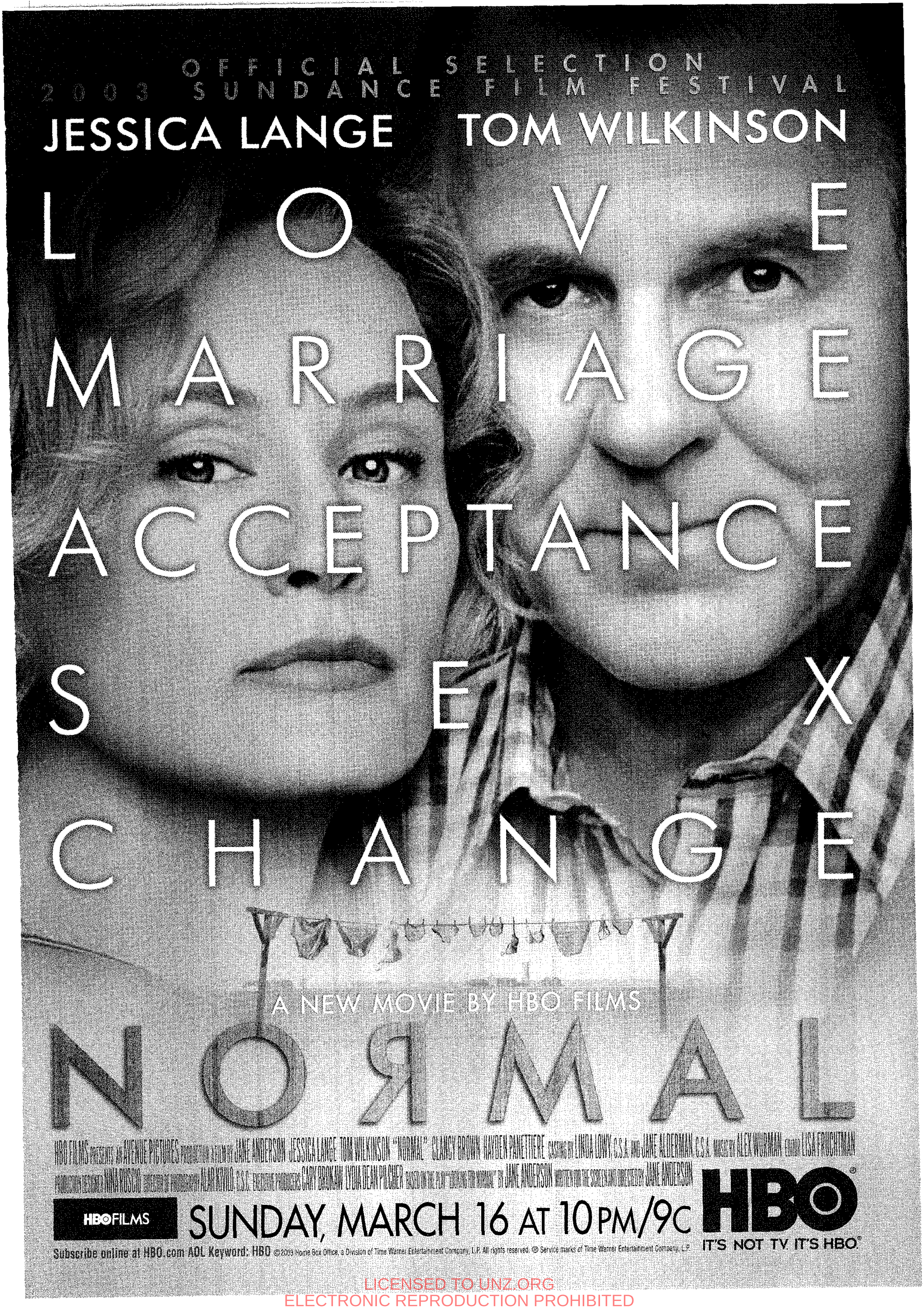
Moviegoers searching for a post-Oscar fix should look for **STEVIE** (March 28), a documentary from Steve James, who also made "Hoop Dreams." This film, which took several years to complete, charts the uncomfortably close relationship between James and a young man named Stevie; nearly a decade after James served as the young man's Big Brother, Stevie is sent to prison for a sexual crime. Hilary Swank, who rose to fame playing the victim of a sexual crime (Brandon Teena, in "Boys Don't Cry"), returns to theatres that same weekend in **THE CORE**, in which she warns crewmates to "get ready to pull a few Gs" while piloting a ship toward the center of the earth. This felicitous disaster flick destroys the Coliseum in Rome and the state of California in the trailer alone.

Like the first robin, Nick Nolte arrives in April, showing none of the benefits of the antiaging drugs he champions. He appears in **THE GOOD THIEF** (April 2), the director Neil Jordan's reworking of Jean-Pierre Melville's suave gangster classic, "Bob Le Flambeur." Perhaps Jack Nicholson would have been a better choice for a Melvillean antihero, although the pairing of him and Adam Sandler in **ANGER MANAGEMENT** (April 11) looks to be the season's best chemistry experiment. Running a close second is the combination of Ewan McGregor and Renée Zellweger in **DOWN WITH LOVE** (April 18), a retro-romantic comedy (the look is *Esquire* in the sixties). The director is Peyton Reed, a man who, with "Bring It On," breathed new life into the cheerleader movie.

Spring fever might possibly explain Meg Ryan's decision to play a Jewish boxing promoter from Detroit. That's her role in the sports drama **AGAINST THE ROPES** (April 25), based on the true story of Jackie Kallen, who guided the careers of the boxers Thomas Hearns and Bronco McKart. Happily, Christopher Guest's new satire **A MIGHTY WIND** (April 16) returns him to familiar ground. Remember the moody acoustic group that opened for Spinal Tap on their triumphant world tour? Guest and his team of mockumentarians bring their lampoon of the music world full circle, taking aim at folkies. From Sweden, Lukas Moodysson's drama **LILYA 4-EVER** (April 11), with a sixteen-year-old Russian runaway as a protagonist, should provide a potent dose of Scandinavian bleakness. And, from around the world, the documentary **WINGED MIGRATION** (April 18) tracks the flight paths of birds at beak level.

Summer will come early this year. The blockbuster season kicks off on May 2 with **X2**, the mutant-superhero spectacular directed by Bryan Singer and populated by stars like Halle Berry and Hugh Jackman. This continuation of the "X-Men" comic-book series hopes to capture moviegoers before M-Day, the 15th, when **THE MATRIX RELOADED** will surround and enclose us. The question on everyone's lips: is Keanu Reeves still "the One" or will the Wachowski brothers suffer from a swan dive of "Phantom Menace" proportions? Confidence in the franchise is high, especially given the reverse-traffic motorcycle chase glimpsed during the film's Super Bowl advertisement. If you see the movie on its opening night, you will have to wait only a hundred and seventy-five days to find out what happens to Keanu, Laurence, and Carrie-Anne. That's when **THE MATRIX REVOLUTIONS**, the final installment of the trilogy, is scheduled to rearrange reality.

TOMER HANUKA

OFFICIAL SELECTION
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HBO FILMS PRESENTS AN AVENUE PICTURES PRODUCTION A FILM BY JANE ANDERSON JESSICA LANGE TOM WILKINSON "NORMAL" CLANCY BROWN HAYDEN PANETTIERE CASTING BY LINDA LOWY, C.S.A. AND JANE ALDERMAN, C.S.A. MUSIC BY ALEX WURMAN EDITOR LISA FRUCHTMAN PRODUCTION DESIGNER NINA RUSCIO DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ALAR KIVILO, C.S.C. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CARY BROKAW LYDIA DEAN PILCHER BASED ON THE PLAY "LOOKING FOR NORMAL" BY JANE ANDERSON WRITTEN FOR THE SCREEN AND DIRECTED BY JANE ANDERSON

HBO FILMS

SUNDAY, MARCH 16 AT 10 PM/9C

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LE CERCLE ROUGE
Quad Cinema.
CONFESSIONS OF A DANGEROUS MIND
Lincoln Square and Union Square.
HIDEO NAKATA'S CHAOS
Cinema Village.
NOWHERE IN AFRICA
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.
OPEN HEARTS
Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
RUSSIAN ARK (12/16/02)
Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kew Gardens Cinema, 81-05 Lefferts Blvd., Queens (718-441-9835).
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (212-334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

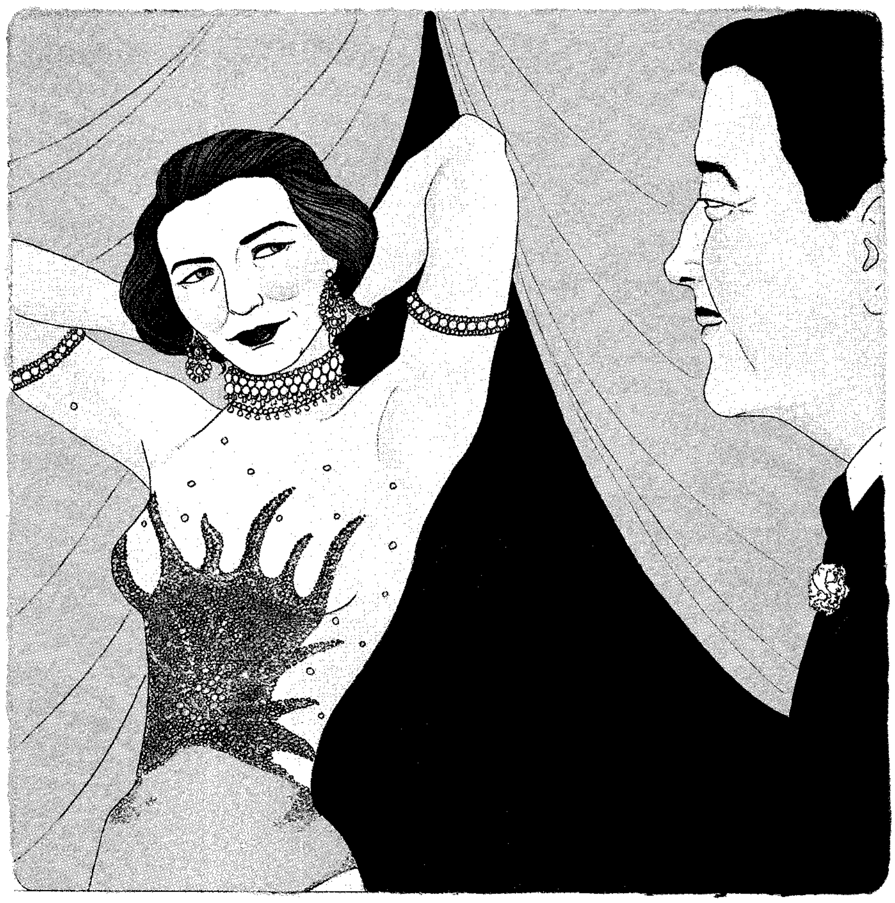
REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through March 30: Films selected by the New York Film Critics Circle. March 15 at 2: "Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song" (1971, Melvin Van Peebles), introduced by Gene Seymour. ♦ March 15 at 4: "National Lampoon's Animal House" (1978, John Landis), introduced by Jonathan Foreman. ♦ March 16 at 2: "Eraserhead" (1978, David Lynch), introduced by David Sterritt. ♦ March 16 at 4: "The Blair Witch Project" (1999, Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sanchez), introduced by Mike D'Angelo. ♦ Repertory nights. March 15-16 at 6:30: "8 1/2" (1963, Federico Fellini; in Italian).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—March 13-14 at 7 and 9 and March 15-16 at 5, 7, and 9: "Life & Debt" (2001, Stephanie Black).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—March 12 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Parnell" (1937, John Stahl). ♦ March 13 at 7: Charlie Chaplin shorts. ♦ March 14 at 6:50 and 9:30: "The Price of Forgiveness" (2001, Mansour Sora Wade; in Wolof). ♦ March 15 at 2 and 6:50: "L'Afrance" (2001, Alain Gomis; in French). ♦ March 15 at 4:30 and 9:10: "Bronx Barbès" (2000, Elaine de Latour; in French). ♦ March 16 at 2 and 6:50: "100 Days" (2000, Nick Hughes). ♦ March 16 at 4:30 and 9:10: African shorts. ♦ March 17 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Four Times That Night" (1972, Mario Bava; in Italian). ♦ March 18 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Ride Lonesome" (1959, Budd Boetticher).


At the Gramercy, Cyd Charisse and Robert Taylor in Nicholas Ray's "Party Girl."

DONNELL MEDIA CENTER
20 W. 53rd St. (212-621-0609)—A Doris Chase retrospective, in celebration of the artist's eightieth birthday. March 13 at 2:30: "Lies," "Window," and other works. Selections from Chase's dance series will screen throughout the day.

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through March 27: "Fassbinder," a six-week retrospective. All films are in German. March 12 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "Katzelmacher" (1969). ♦ March 13-15 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:35, and 9:50: "Lola" (1982). ♦ March 16-17 at 1:10, 3:50, 6:30, and 9:20 and March 18 at 1:10: "Effi Briest" (1974). ♦ March 18 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Despair" (1979).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—The cinematography of Raoul Coutard. March 18 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "The 317th Platoon" (1965, Pierre Schoendoerffer; in French).

GRAMERCY THEATRE
127 E. 23rd St. (212-777-4900)—Starting March 13: "Nicholas Ray, Writ Large," a twenty-three-film retrospective. March 13 at 8:15: "Party Girl" (1958). ♦ March 14 at 2 and March 17 at 6: "Flying Leathernecks" (1951). ♦ March 14 at 4:30: "Run for Cover" (1955). ♦ March 14 at 6:15: "The Lusty Men" (†). ♦ March 14 at 8:30: "Johnny Guitar" (†). ♦ March 15 at 1:30: "On Dangerous Ground" (1951). ♦ March 15 at 3:30: "They Live by Night" (1947). ♦ March 15 at 6: "Rebel Without a Cause" (1955). ♦ March 15 at 8:15: "Bitter Victory" (1957). ♦ March 16 at 1:30 and March 17 at 8: "Knock on Any Door" (1949). ♦ March 16 at 3:30: "A Woman's Secret" (1949). ♦ March 16 at 5:30: "In a Lonely Place" (1950).

PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300)—March 12-18: "The French Connection" (1971, William Friedkin).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (212-358-0573)—Midnight movies. March 14-15: "Dazed and Confused" (†).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"New Voices Since the Eighties." March 15 at 1 and 6:30: "Blue Velvet" (1986, David Lynch). ♦ March 15 at 3:15 and 8:45: "Mulholland Drive" (2001, Lynch). ♦ March 16 at 2 and 6: "Midnight" (1998, Walter Salles; in Portuguese). ♦ March 16 at 3:15 and 7:15: "Foreign Land" (1995, Salles; in Portuguese).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through March 16: "Rendez-Vous with French Cinema 2003." March 12 at 1 and 6:15 and March 13 at 8:45: "Life Kills Me" (2002, Jean-Pierre Sinapi). ♦ March 12 at 3:45, March 13 at 6:15, and March 16 at 9: "Untouched by the West" (2003, Raymond Depardon). ♦ March 12 at 8:45 and March 13 at 1: "Seaside" (2002, Julie Lopes-Curval). ♦ March 13 at 3:15 and March 15 at 3:45: "Demonlover" (2002, Olivier Assayas). ♦ March 14 at 1 and 6 and March 16 at 1:30: "24 Hours in the Life of a Woman" (2002, Laurent Bouhnik). ♦ March 14 at 3:30 and 8:45: "Housekeeper" (2002, Claude Berri). ♦ March 15 at 1:30 and 9:15 and March 16 at 7: "Monique" (2002, Valérie Guignabodet). ♦ March 15 at 6:30 and March 16 at 4: "Carnage" (2002, Delphine Gleize).

LARA TOMLIN

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Advertisement

SMOOTH UNDER PRESSURE

THE FLAMBEAU OVAL TABLE PRESENTS
THE 2003 OVAL AWARDS

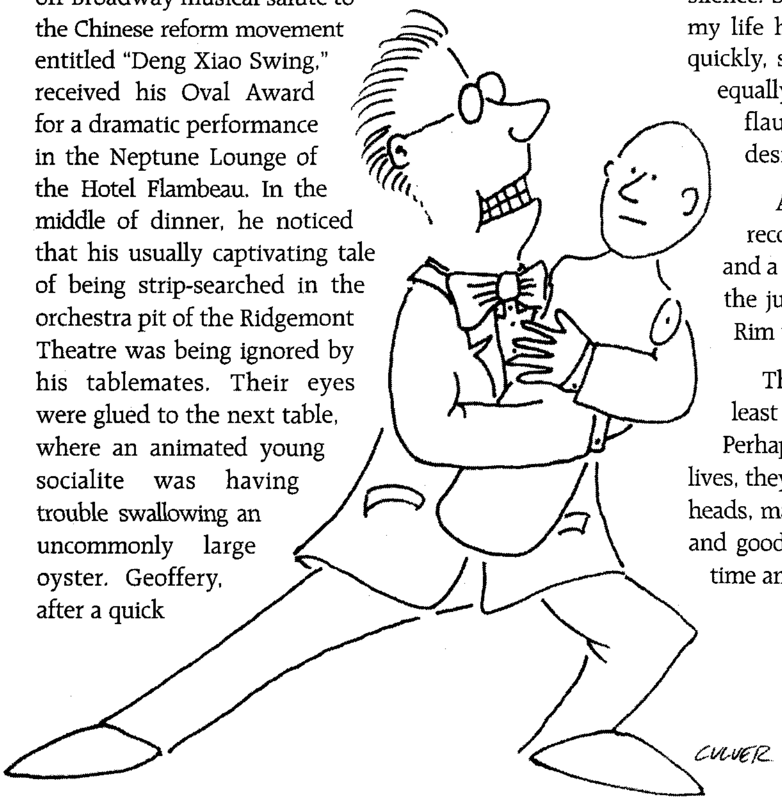
While "brilliant" performances in every media imaginable are honored – ad nauseum – with highly publicized awards, exceptional behavior in everyday life is not. One might surmise from this pattern of acknowledgement that staged images and rehearsed frivolities are more highly prized in our society than is essence and character.

Troubling signs of this attitude are evident even in our language, where words like "smooth" once referred to the ability to maintain composure in the face of calamity; to calmly seize victory from the jaws of chaos; to brandish one's wit over brutish ignorance. Today, "smooth" seems more often confused with "slick," referring to practiced behaviors or manicured appearances.

Fortunately, smoothness is still regarded as an honored virtue in at least one venerable corner of our world – the Oval Table at the Hotel Flambeau. This storied group of irrepressible artisans who gather daily for lunch and the occasional cocktail – and upon whom we rely for sparkling, yet malicious commentary, juicy gossip and tastefully notorious behavior – has performed an admirable public service by creating The Oval Awards. The highlights of this year's annual recognition of smooth demeanor and worthy character include:

THE SMOOTH ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

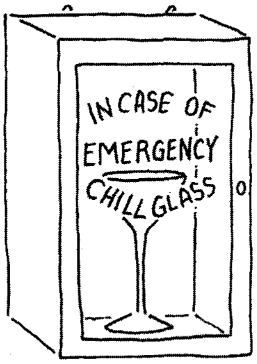
Geoffery Gimbel French, renowned dancer/choreographer, and producer of the rousing off-Broadway musical salute to the Chinese reform movement entitled "Deng Xiao Swing," received his Oval Award for a dramatic performance in the Neptune Lounge of the Hotel Flambeau. In the middle of dinner, he noticed that his usually captivating tale of being strip-searched in the orchestra pit of the Ridgemont Theatre was being ignored by his tablemates. Their eyes were glued to the next table, where an animated young socialite was having trouble swallowing an uncommonly large oyster. Geoffery, after a quick sip of his VOX Metropolitan (2 parts VOX® Vodka, and a splash each of Chambord, cranberry juice and seltzer), jumped to his feet and performed "The Gimbel French Dip" – his own embellished version of the popular Heimlich Maneuver. Grabbing the young lady around the waist with one arm and her outstretched, gyrating hand with the other, he snapped her forward, applied rhythmic pressure at the sternum, then dipped her back into a deep bend to eject the offending oyster off towards the dessert trolley. In true Oval fashion, he returned her to a standing position, planted a light peck on her rosy cheek, tidied his lips with his napkin, and resumed intimacy with his cocktail.



Geoffrey Gimbel French recreates his rescue technique with a mannequin from Lillard Wayne.

THE HIGH ANXIETY AWARD

While smoothness is a most cherished commodity of the members of the Oval table, a special "High Anxiety" award is given each year to the person who most dramatically displays the opposite behavior – namely, becoming frequently flustered, frozen in shock, bellicose when ignored, and prone to storming out of the room in a huff. For the eighth year in a row, **Ms. Honoria Pelligan** has claimed the award – not such a surprising feat considering she has been the only one ever nominated.



Her latest cited episode occurred in August of 2002 when, while being coiffed at "La Plumage," she was inadvertently de-banged by an allergy-suffering hairdresser. After the poorly timed sneeze and snip, Ms. Pelligan's jaw dropped in stunned silence. She then leaped to her feet and shrieked, "Never in my life have I witnessed such shear stupidity!" Thinking quickly, she sat back down and had the left side trimmed equally short. Head held high, she exited the salon, flaunting the fashionable new hairstyle she designated "The Mo-hattan."

A severely shaken (but not stirred) Ms. Pelligan recovered fully after a brief sit-down at the Oval Table and a chilled VOX Citramint Martini (3 parts VOX Vodka, the juice of 1/4 fresh lemon and a splash of lime juice. Rim the glass with rock sugar. Garnish with fresh mint).

Thanks to the Oval Awards, our attention is drawn at least once a year to the importance of smoothness. Perhaps throughout the entire year, indeed throughout our lives, they will help us focus just a touch more on keeping our heads, maintaining our cool and acting wisely with precision and good humor. Because in the end, as fate demonstrates time and time again, smoothness always prevails.

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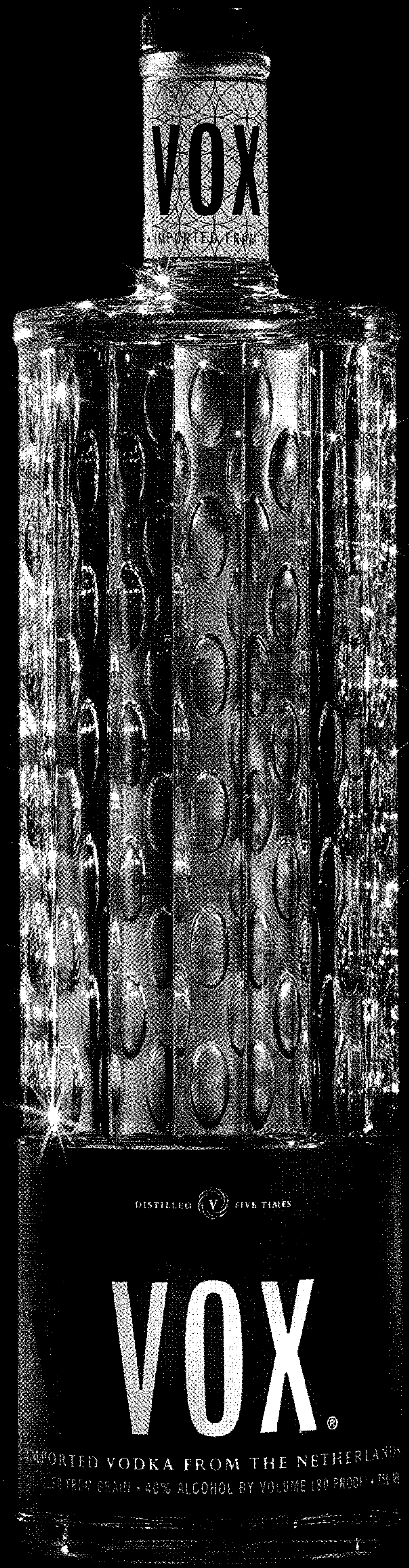
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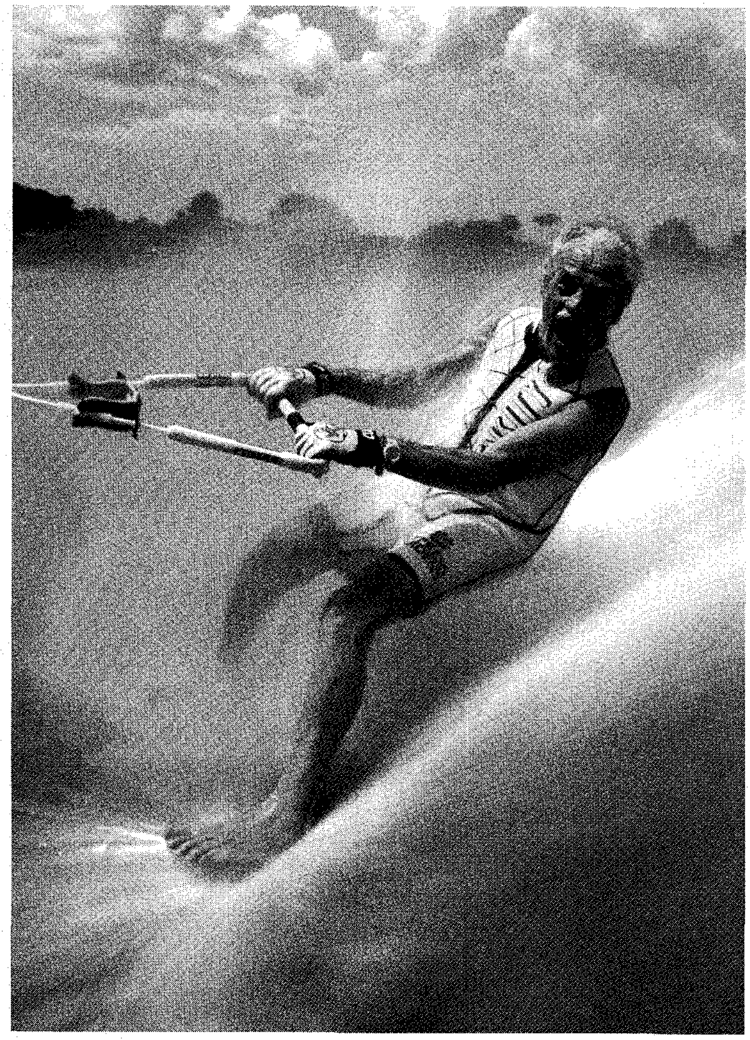

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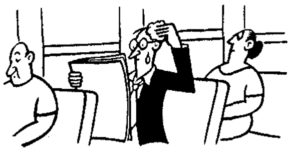
THE NEW YORKER

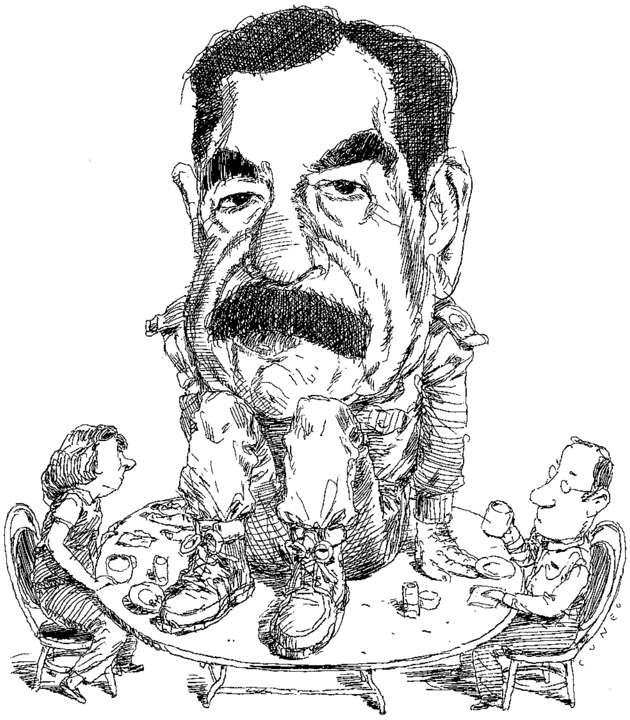
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
ATTACK ANXIETY



Writing on the Op-Ed page of the *Times* the other day, Christopher Buckley reminisced about a previous era when Europeans turned out by the million to demonstrate in the streets against what they took to be American bellicosity. Twenty years ago, Buckley, who is now a well-known satirical novelist, was an aide to the then Vice-President of the United States, George H. W. Bush. What Europeans were protesting in 1983 was the pending deployment on their territory of Pershing 2 missiles, which their governments had earlier demanded in order to offset similar Soviet missiles that were already in place. At a Q. & A. session in London's Guildhall, with demonstrators shouting outside, a clergyman got up to say indignantly that he didn't want to see his children incinerated in an American-initiated nuclear war. According to Buckley, Bush managed to defuse the moment. "Look, I have kids, too," the Vice-President said plaintively. "Don't you think I want to see them grow up?"

Although Buckley doesn't mention it (he is making a different point, about the value of diplomatic tact), and although his boss probably didn't mean to be taken literally, the five Bush kids, at that moment, were not exactly toddlers. They ranged in age from twenty-three to thirty-six. But the eldest, if no longer a child, had not fully made the transition to adulthood. He had fumbled a congressional campaign that seemed to voters little more than a rich boy's indulgence; he had blown the first of his subsidized forays into the oil business; he was partying hard. He was still three years away from giving up drink, taking up religion, and beginning his fitful ascent. Now the thirty-six-year-old is a fifty-six-year-old, and he is, ex officio, all grown up. He is the President of the United States, and a great deal hangs on the maturity and wisdom of his judgment. That, to some, is not a comforting thought.



JOHN CUNEO

George W. Bush is not perplexed about what must be done about Saddam Hussein's Iraq. He believes that there must be war, and soon, and he has lost no sleep over it. "If anyone can be at peace," he said the other day, "I am at peace about this." The President is one of those lucky people who know exactly what they think about Iraq—know it to a moral certainty, as the saying goes. Such people flourish on both sides. On one side is a set of mostly neoconservative policy intellectuals and civilian Pentagon officials, some of whom have been maneuvering for a decade toward the war that is nearly upon us. Their most reliable supporters, besides the President, are the sort of evangelical-Christian conservatives who contemplate Armageddon with something like rapture. On the other side, equally convinced of their moral rectitude, are traditional pacifists and the sort of angry leftists for whom any exercise of American military power, because it is American, is wrong. They (along with

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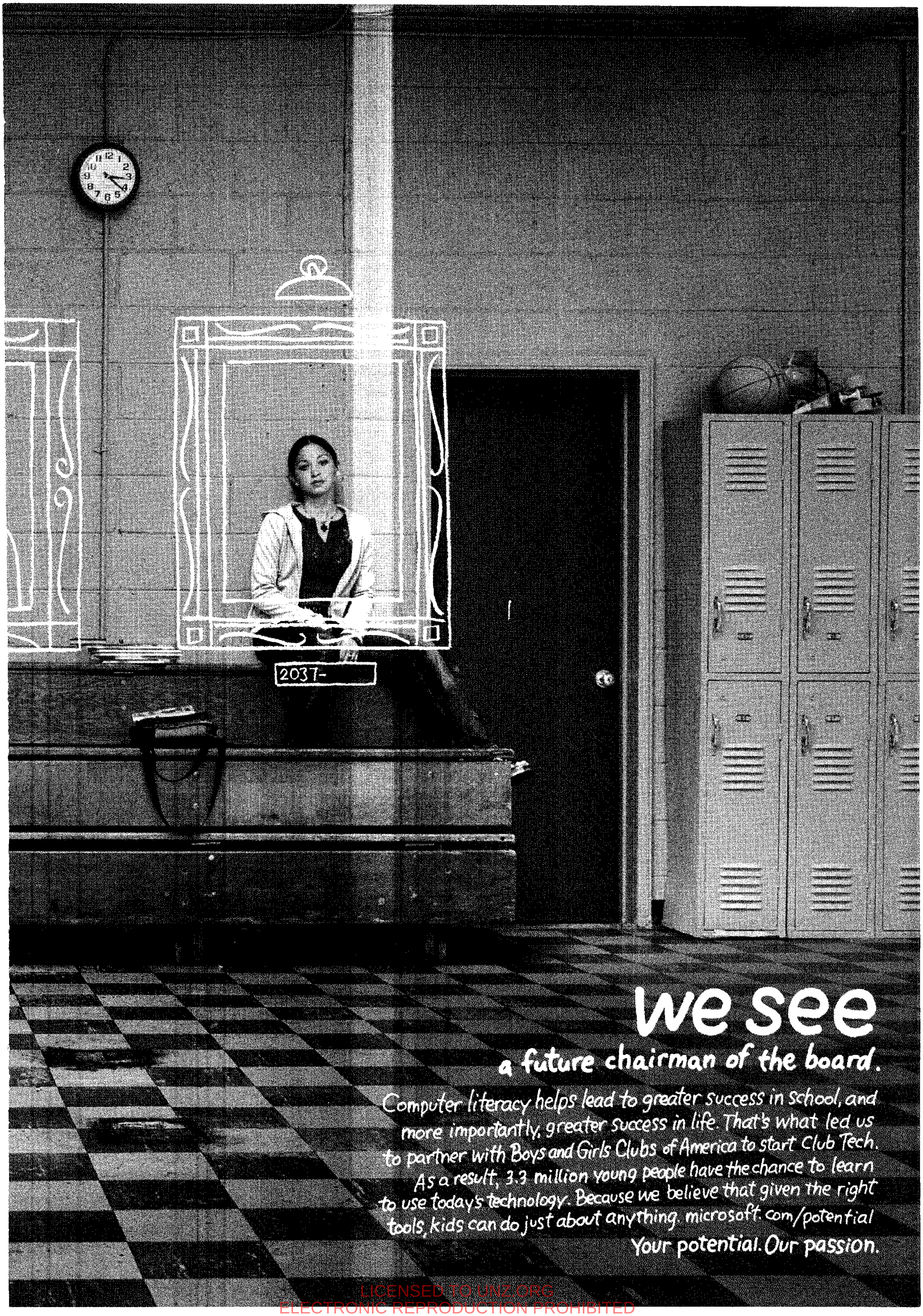

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activists from the mainstream Christian denominations, Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox) provided the organizing energy and most of the platform rhetoric—though not the massive numbers—for the street demonstrations of February 15th.

THE AVERTED

The one whose eyes
do not meet yours
is alone at heart
and looks where the dead look
for an ally in his cause.

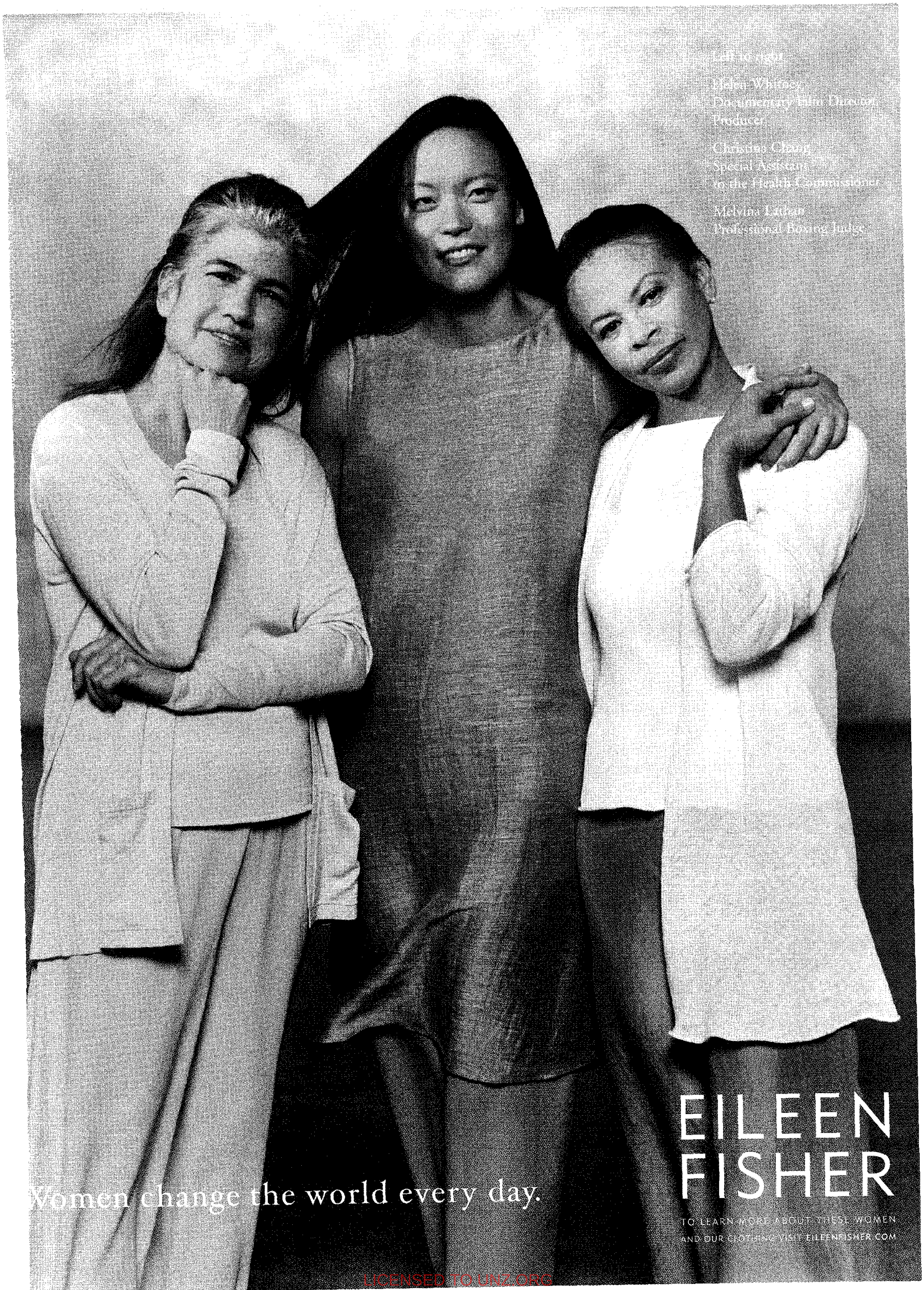
—*Les Murray*

Not everyone is so sure. Both among those who, on balance, support the coming war and among those who, on balance, oppose it are a great many who hold their views in fear and trembling, haunted by the suspicion that the other side might be right after all. In the American "homeland," the anxiety that this crisis is provoking is physical (a dread that, for obvious reasons, is perhaps stronger in New York and Washington than elsewhere), but it is also intellectual. The divisions are profound, and the most agonizing are not between people but within them. The phenomenon is visible in the tabular abstractions of opinion surveys. According to one fairly typical recent poll, conducted for the University of Maryland's Program on International Policy Attitudes, only a bare majority of the public favors the United Nations' authorizing an invasion as opposed to a "strengthened inspection process." But much larger—and therefore substantially overlapping—majorities, usually in the seventy-per-cent range, say that they are convinced by the mutually exclusive arguments of both sides. They agree that the United States should not invade Iraq without the approval of the United Nations, and also that the U.N.'s disapproval must not be allowed to stand in the way; that Iraqi intransigence is such that the United States now has no choice but to invade, and also that strengthened inspections are preferable to invasion; that an invasion should begin soon, because Iraq's weapons of mass destruction will otherwise only become stronger, and also that an invasion should not begin at all, because it would provoke Saddam to use those weapons. When people have no idea of the consequences of a given course of action or inaction, they don't know which way to turn—or they turn both ways.

Last week, while the Administration was strenuously hinting that war might be only days away, the full, catastrophic dimensions of its diplomatic endgame ballooned into view. On Saturday, the Turkish parliament unexpectedly rebelled, voting down a government proposal to let the United States use Turkish bases as the staging ground for a northern front in Iraq. All through the week, American officials, from the President on down, tried futilely to get commitments from enough of the six wavering nonpermanent members of the Security Council to guarantee the nine out of fifteen votes necessary, assuming no vetoes, to pass a new resolution sponsored by the United States, Britain, and Spain. By midweek, none had said yes, and Chile had said no. Canada, our friendly neighbor to the north, was said to be seething because a compromise that it had quietly, tentatively floated—it would have set a new but not distant deadline for full Iraqi compliance (the end of March, say), authorizing "all necessary means" if specific goals were not met—was deemed by the Administration to be unworthy of even cursory exploration. Then, on Wednesday, the foreign ministers of France, Russia, and Germany stood together in Paris and pronounced the new resolution all but dead. Washington had not expected this, either. Patrick Tyler, on the front page of the *Times*, called it a "thunderbolt" that "may go down as the loudest 'No!' shouted across the Atlantic in a half-century or more." "In these circumstances," the Franco-Russian-German statement said (without quite explaining what "these circumstances" were), "we will not let a proposed resolution pass that would authorize the use of force. Russia and France, as permanent members of the Security Council, will assume all their responsibilities on this point." The word "veto" was not mentioned; but then, when President Bush speaks of America assuming its responsibilities with respect to Iraq, the word "war" is not usually mentioned, either.

After September 11, 2001, enormous crowds in Berlin and London and Paris, and even in Tehran, bore candlelit witness to their solidarity with wounded America. NATO, for the first time ever, invoked the provision of its charter declaring an attack against one to be an attack against all. With the blessing of the U.N. Security Council, the soldiers of a dozen countries fought alongside ours in Afghanistan. (Germans and French, among others, are still there.) Just a year and a half later, in almost every sizable city of Europe, North America, and the rest of the democratic world, the United States government became the target of what was apparently the largest coördinated one-day popular protest in the history of the world. In the Security Council, America's adversaries suddenly include, for the time being, at least, its putative friends, old and new alike. And wherever pollsters ply their trade they find—incredibly—that the publics of the democratic world regard the United States as a greater menace to peace and safety than Iraq.

How did it come to this? Some of the strain, as Robert Kagan argues, is structural, the natural result of asymmetries—of military strength, of historical experience—between America and Europe. And some is the consequence of European obtuseness, shortsightedness, hypocrisy, and wishful thinking. Russia and France (and, to a lesser extent, Germany) are not without blame in this crackup. Each in its own way is playing for advantage, worrying over its portion of influence in the world, calculating its economic stakes in Iraq and the Middle East generally.

Left to right
Helen Whitney
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Producer
Christina Chang
Special Assistant
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Melvina Lathan
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But it is the policies, attitudes, and ideological blindnesses of the Bush Administration that have turned a chronic but manageable alliance problem into an acute crisis.

"The scale of the failure of U.S. diplomacy to give Bush workable alternatives to the situation in which he finds himself—going to war over the concerted opposition of allies and world public opinion—is staggering," Jim Hoagland, the normally hawkish foreign-policy columnist of the Washington *Post*, wrote last week. The roots of that failure have been growing for two years. The Administration trashed the Kyoto environmental treaty, the A.B.M. treaty, and the treaty establishing the International Criminal Court, and did so contemptuously and arrogantly, without offering compromises or remedies for their flaws; it demanded the ouster of Yasir Arafat while offering no resistance to the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank; it defined the war on terrorism exclusively in the theological language of good versus evil, viewing any attempt to analyze terrorism politically as morally inadmissible; it undermined the power of the convincing reasons for confronting Saddam (such as his consistent failure to disclose and dispose of his weapons of mass destruction) by mixing them with unconvincing ones (such as his alleged coöperation with Al Qaeda); it created the impression that the U.N. effort to disarm Iraq has been a charade masking a predetermined plan to oust Saddam by force no matter what. Even among those who believe that an invasion of Iraq, sooner or later, cannot be avoided, some are asking, Where is the Administration's wisdom, its sense of diplomatic touch, its Great Power modesty?

"I can only just go by my instincts," President Bush told Bob Woodward in an interview for "Bush at War." Woodward adds, "It's pretty clear that Bush's role as politician, President and commander in chief is driven by a secular faith in his instincts—his natural and spontaneous conclusions and judgments. His instincts are almost his second religion." And if the commandment of his first religion is peace, that of his second, it seems clearer than ever, is war.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

DO IT YOURSELF
EATING LIKE A NOMINEE

It is fashionable to lament the increasing number of awards ceremonies in the entertainment business, but the lament is mean and unjust. Records show that, in the past two months alone, there have been entire weekday evenings on which Julianne Moore had to stay home. But, if the prospect of temporary prizelessness is bleak for our leading actors, imagine how galling it must be for ordinary Americans, who have surely earned the right to switch on their televisions, at any given hour of the day, and find fresh, irrefutable proof that it is possible to have an emotional collapse in a strapless ballgown.

Thank heavens, then, for the Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards, tucked neatly between the swelling cheeks of the Golden Globes and Oscar Night. The ninth such gathering took place on Sunday, March 9th, at the Los Angeles Shrine Exposition Center, which is where devout Angelenos go to have their shrines exposed. Pedants may quibble with the acronym bestowed upon this glittering event—there are cries more enticing, perhaps, than "Hey, let's all go to the SAGs!"—but most of us, scanning the list of presenters for this year, will think ourselves accursed we were not there. How else could we hope to rub shoulders with the dream that is Donnie Wahlberg?

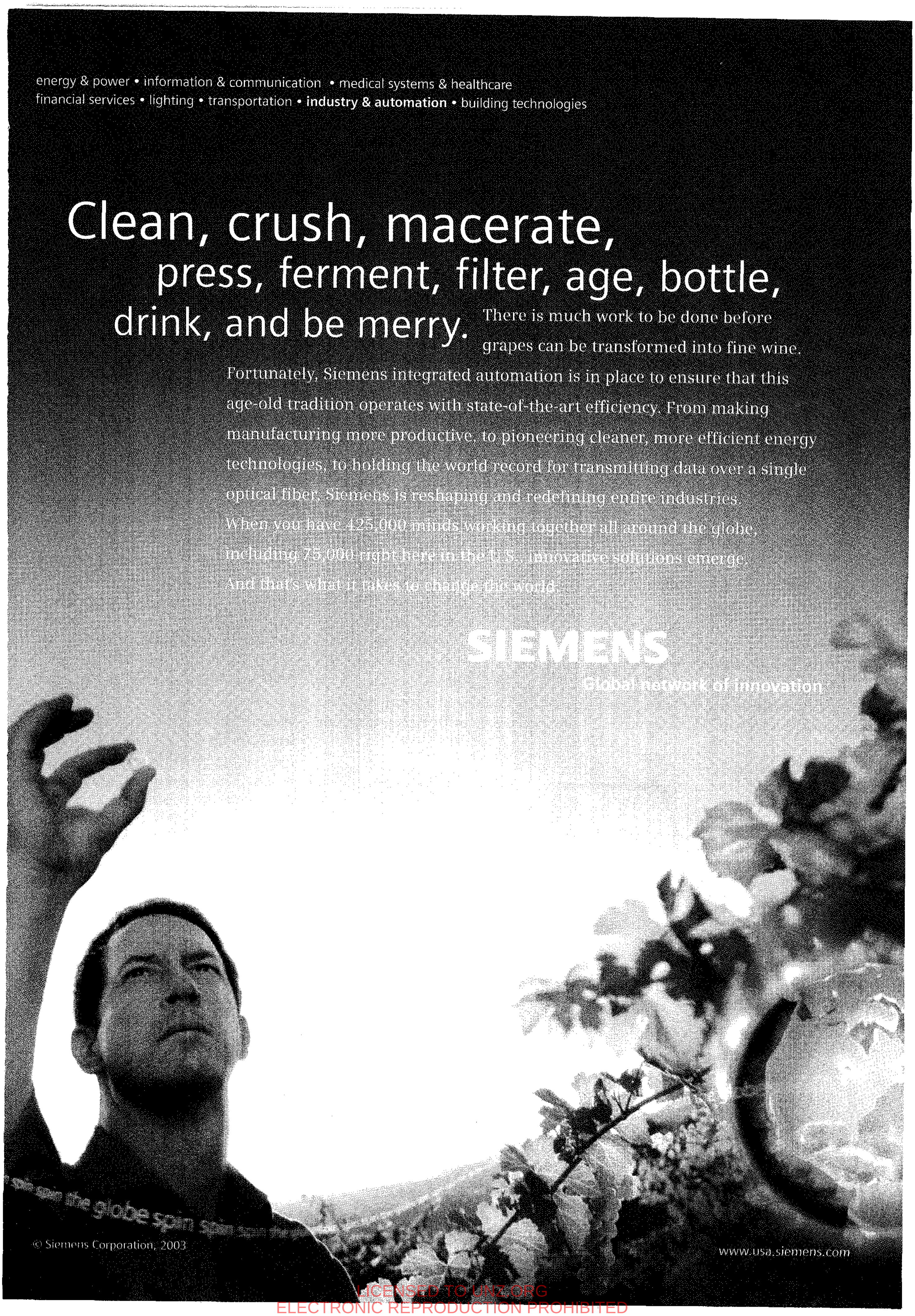
The brutal answer is: we couldn't. But, thanks to a new electronic taster, we were able to share some of the magic that was coming Donnie's way. Six days beforehand, an e-mail blitz delivered the details of the SAG festivities. The awards art director, Michael Venedicto, would be adorning the eighty-four dining tables with "custom pyramids," requiring, in total, nine hundred pounds of crushed black glass. To be honest, this sounded dangerous, and the consequences for world peace of spilling crushed glass on the chair of Pierce Brosnan, say, shortly before he took his seat, don't bear thinking about. Even before he found his table, 007 would have to claw his way through the entrance to the Shrine, draped for the occasion with "seven hundred yards of camel fabric."

If anybody can get hold of that much camel on a Sunday afternoon, it has to be Gary Arabia, the chef bestriding this year's party, who is plainly laying the groundwork for a public campaign to have the missing "of" reinserted in the middle of his name. Gary promised his guests a sensuous meal, explaining, "Light and subtle nuances help to complete this singular visceral plate." Just how visceral became clear when you read the quantities involved: six hundred pounds of prime beef, fourteen pounds of caviar, five *gallons* of fennel crème fraîche, and, most disturbing of all, two thousand four hundred "potato nets," which were presumably designed to stop your fries from falling into Elisha Cuthbert's lap.

Viewers were encouraged not merely to watch the bonanza on TNT but to "create the elegant SAG Awards experience at home." For those of you instantly panicked by the thought of crushing all that glass, let alone squeezing six hundred pounds of beef into your trunk, succor was on the way. Gary Arabia was in charge. "Following these instructions will help create the same menu and plate design that the stars will dine on." And the first instruction? "Make chanterelle dust." Ah.

It seems that chanterelle dust is not something you snort but a handful of mushrooms that you torch at insane heat until they are begging for mercy, whereupon you throw them into your coffee grinder. Instruction No. 3 is still more bewildering: "Place endive leaves overlapping each other to make fan at twelve o'clock on plate." Again, some translation is required: the fan is a geometric form, not a weeping girl with an autograph book, and twelve o'clock is not a time but a position. Last, and cruellest, of all: "Place de-skewered giant shrimp cocktail on top of leaves with shrimp remaining in the C position." One bad shrimp, of course, and a dozen stars would be seen shooting toward the bathroom in the Z position.

Statistics are not yet available for March 9th. Thus far, we have no idea how many reputable citizens chose to put on a tuxedo and debauch their shrimp with bamboo skewers, let alone place



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their oven-roasted carrots at nine o'clock. Nor will we ever know whether, as a result of this supreme effort, their souls were able to sense, if only for a moment, just what it feels like to be Melissa Gilbert. But the notion of virtual stardom through food has to be an inspired one, not least because it offers picky viewers the chance to replicate the behavior of their role models by not actually touching the food at all. By now, those gallons of crème fraîche will be nothing but a distant, high-fat nightmare in the memory of Halle Berry, and all that chanterelle dust is blowing in the wind.

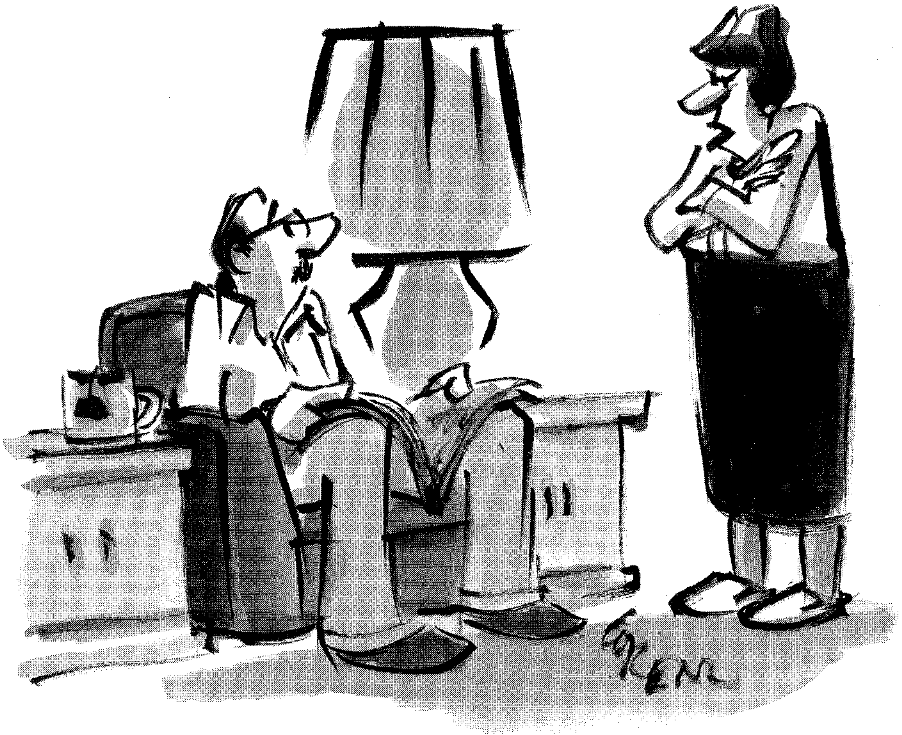
—*Anthony Lane*

ON THE RUNWAY
THE FACE PAINTER

Pat McGrath, a British makeup artist—the most powerful black woman in fashion who is not a model (and not an Irish man, as some of her early clients supposed)—flew to Paris in mid-January with three assistants and fifteen seventy-pound duffelbags that she takes everywhere. (One is marked "Everyday Bag"; another says "Lips"; and six bags hold scores of large-format art books—Fellini, Otto Dix, André Kertész, "Ritual Art of India"). She had been booked to make up the runway models for the couture shows of Christian Dior, Yohji Yamamoto, and Valentino. On the day she arrived, she was driven to a preparatory meeting with John Galliano, to learn about the clothes he had designed for Christian Dior. "On the way, in the van, I'm always paranoid that I'm not going to be able to think of something," McGrath said. "And then I get there, and, you know, something always happens, because the clothes are so beautiful. It stops being 'What on earth can I do?'—because they've already brought you the world." She was dressed all in black: a black untucked shirt worn over black pants, and a black headband pulling back shoulder-length hair. Her skin had the sheen of thorough moisturization, but she was wearing no lipstick.

In the Dior offices, Galliano described his collection, using references to the Peking Opera, Siouxsie and the Banshees, and the late Queen Mother. He showed McGrath scrapbooks filled with images collected on a recent trip to the Far East. Then McGrath and her assistants huddled in a corner and, in a flurry of productivity, began imagining makeup ideas, or "looks"—putting them first on paper, and then on the faces of four borrowed models. The first look was done in forty minutes. McGrath photographed it, and an assistant drew it and annotated it for her archives.

While McGrath is known for bringing a light touch to photo shoots, and for avoiding what she is known to call the "suède face" of heavy makeup (she once made Oprah Winfrey weep with happiness by avoiding it), her runway style is more elaborate. For Dior, she returned three times over three days, to produce about eighty looks. These included Chinese characters written on a model's face; an op-art felt target stuck to the center of a model's forehead; feather eyelashes; white makeup reaching from the chin to halfway up the cheek, directly inspired by a photograph of a half-made-up geisha in one of McGrath's bags; eyes covered with black masking tape (with pinpricks to allow the model to see); a mask of sequins, each placed by hand ("In a way, you're almost relieved if something like that isn't used. You're thinking, Oh, my God, it's going to take forever to do"). Galliano, pleased, looked at the Polaroids—and said "Yes" and "No" until McGrath was left with about ten faces. The felt target and the feather eyelashes had been accepted, but there would be no sequins this time, and no masking tape.



"You're not in material breach, but you're not in full compliance, either."

The Dior collection was shown in a high-roofed tent on the edge of the Bois de Boulogne, in Paris. Inside, two hours before the start of the show, a mist of gold glitter hung in the air between the model Stella Tennant, whose face was already geisha-white from mid-forehead to chin, and McGrath, who was painting gold on Tennant's lips. Alek Wek, the Sudanese-born model, was being painted blue and pink, and was wearing the white feather eyelashes. She moved her head, testing. "I can see straight ahead," she said. "But I can't see to the side. And I can't look down." McGrath walked from model to model, talking to her assistants, who were working from Polaroids taped onto the mirrors. "Very good, perfection. Straighten it out. Take the mouth off, put the white on with your fingers. The brow is showing."

At the place backstage where the models would step onto the runway, there was a handwritten sign with stage

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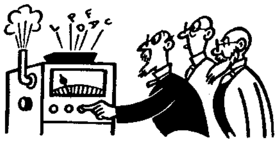
directions. "Hard-Core Romance," it read. "Intense! Intense! Intense!" But around McGrath the mood was closer to a school field trip taken in the care of a permissive history teacher. McGrath saw a model with smudged lipstick, and, mock-scolding, said, "Did you just eat?" ("No.") "Did you drink?" ("No.") "Did you have a cigarette?" ("No.") "Well, you did something."

When the show finally started, more than an hour late, McGrath stood in a black cloth apron, a jar of gold glitter in its pocket. The models, wearing platform shoes that made them seven feet tall, and looking as if they had been overwhelmed by the Queen Mother's curtains, passed McGrath for a final check (she could barely reach their faces), and then passed Galliano, before stepping onto the runway. McGrath lost her composure only for a moment, when the Italian model Mariacarla Boscono accidentally hit her quite hard over the head with a parasol. When the show ended, an hour later, Galliano took an extravagant curtain call, and McGrath said, "Genius, genius," and was out of the tent immediately, into the van for the next show, and within a few minutes was at the Théâtre National de Chaillot, among men with tans and leather suits, deep in conversation with the designer Valentino Garavani about shades of red lipstick.

—*Ian Parker*

IN THE BASEMENT
THE BOILER MAN



One thing that distinguishes Henry Gifford's New York City Boiler Tour is the fact that there are no boiler tours quite like it in New York City, not to mention anywhere else in the United States or, possibly, the world. Another is the singular passion for boilers that is exhibited by Henry Gifford, of Gifford Fuel Saving, Inc. Gifford came to boilers late in life, when he was twenty and had already worked as a bicycle mechanic, a window-gate welder, and a landlord. As a landlord, Gifford had calculated that the biggest variable in terms of expenses was the boiler. He observed that in the boiler arena there seemed to be what he called a "knowledge vacuum," and he set out to fill it. "I miss having buildings," Henry, who is now forty-two, said the other day, as his tour was about to kick off. "But I would have gotten tired of it by now, and I would have missed all the fun I've had with boilers."

Not surprisingly, some of the forty-one people who signed up for this inaugural boiler tour did so as much to be with Henry as to see the boilers. Tim Baker, the managing editor of a mechanical-engineering magazine, flew in from Cleveland. "I mean, you can just sense the love that this guy has for boilers," Baker said.

The three-day tour started early on a cold Thursday on the ground floor of a multifamily apartment building on East Fifth Street. Over coffee and bagels, Henry introduced people. "You know when you want to see what kind of an airflow you've got in a room, so you measure it with a blower door? Well, this guy makes them," he said, pointing to Gary Nelson, who had flown in from Minnesota, and who was scanning the room with an infrared camera, searching for heat leakage. There was the usual run of boiler enthusiasts: architects, alternative-energy marketers, officials from the Building Performance Institute, and a landlord named Ralph, who looked like an old sailor.

Henry began with a lecture, accompanied by slides. In his view, the two most prominent New York City heat-related phenomena—open windows in overheated apartments, and clanking radiators—are prime examples of boiler ignorance and waste. To no one's surprise, Henry's talk went long.

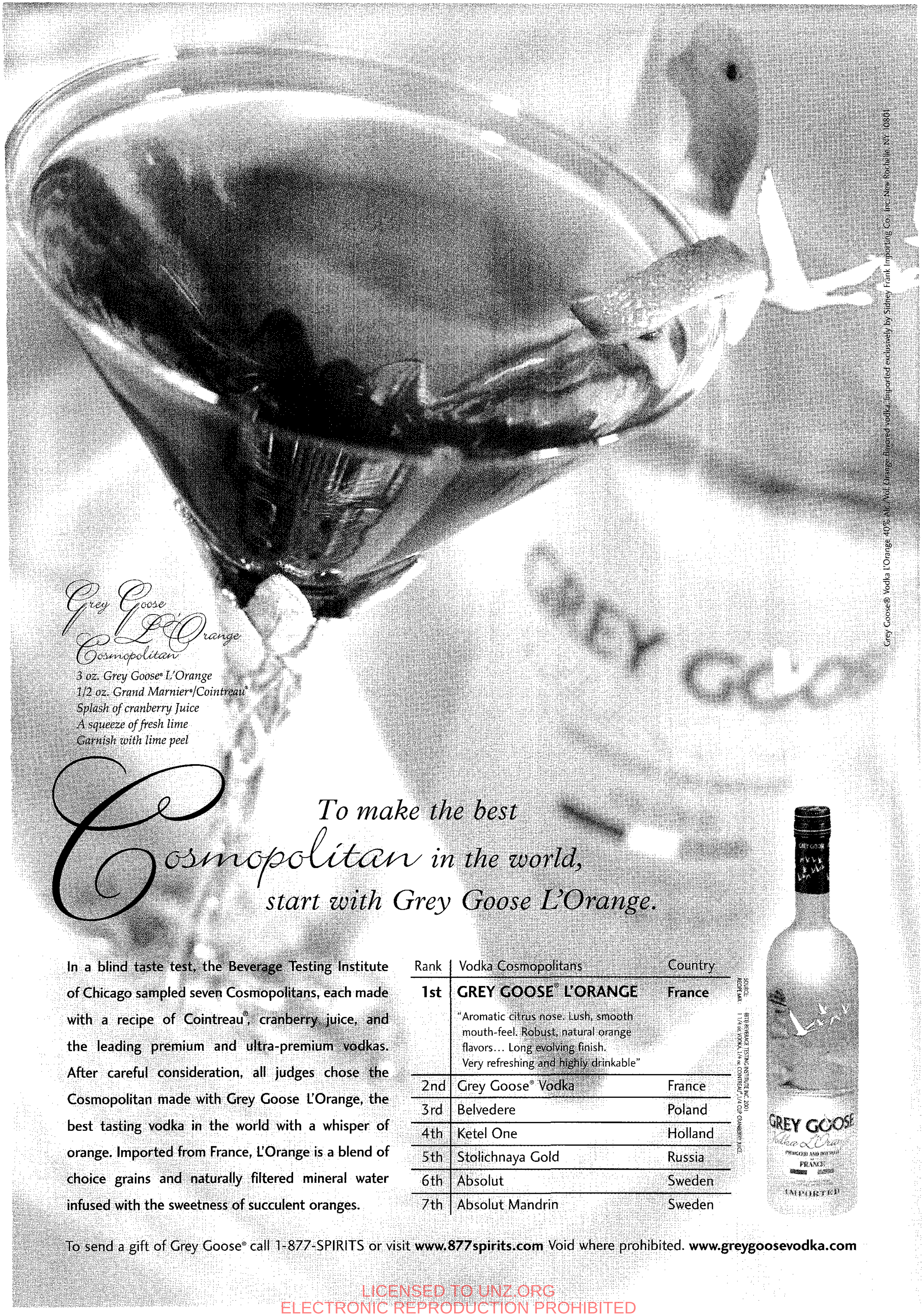
When he was done, the tour group set out to look at some boilers. There was a quick stop at a building on Avenue C, to watch a boiler-related film, "Carmelita Tropicana: Your Kunst Is Your Waffen," starring Carmelita Tropicana, a superintendent/performance artist. That was followed by a lunch break at Katz's Delicatessen, on Houston Street, where a woman in a fur coat said to the group, "What? Are you bird-watching?" Someone told her what they were up to. "Boilers!" she said. "Oh, that's not very exciting." In the afternoon, Henry sneaked his people into the basement of an old church, where they saw the history of boilers encapsulated: turn-of-the-century coal to eighties super-efficient natural-gas-fired pulse combustion, then back to oil. On the way out, an engineer from Massachusetts said, "I feel excitingly illicit."

The next day, everyone met up in Harlem, in a brownstone with hundred-year-old radiators, each with a thermostat attached, a detail that made Henry ecstatic, even though Con Edison hadn't hooked up the gas and everyone was shivering. In the basement, with a single light bulb dangling above his head, he described the Gifford formula for calculating pipe friction and flow, a formula that, despite Henry's best efforts, has yet to be embraced by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning.

All told, the boiler tour went on for seven days—four days and many heating systems more than Henry had planned. But it was during the lecture/slide show, on the first day, that Tim Baker, the engineering-magazine editor, asked the question that seemed to sum it all up. "Henry," he said, his pen in the air. "You've talked about the ignorance, the dishonesty. Why is this?"

Henry's face broke into a grin that was bright enough to heat a loft space. He turned to an associate, who was working the slide projector. "Put the Madonna slide on," he said. The slide showed young people standing in line on a Greenwich Village sidewalk. "O.K., so these people want to be dancers with Madonna's world tour," Henry said. "Look at this—the line stretches around the block. I asked these people, 'How much does this job pay per hour?' And none of them knew. This has to do with what I call the Gifford Status-Money Ratio: the amount of money a job pays is inversely correlated to the amount of status the job has. The dancers get paid with social status. Boiler work has zero or negative social status. And this ratio also influences the quality of work to be gotten from a person working in that field. In the basement, there's money, but there's no status. This doesn't mean you're dumb if you work in the basement. It just means that you're not expected to be smart. The fact is, excellence is not expected in the basement."

—*Robert Sullivan*



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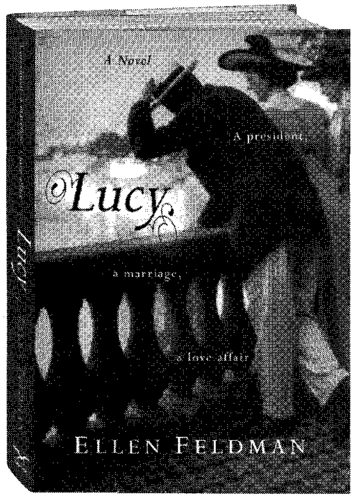

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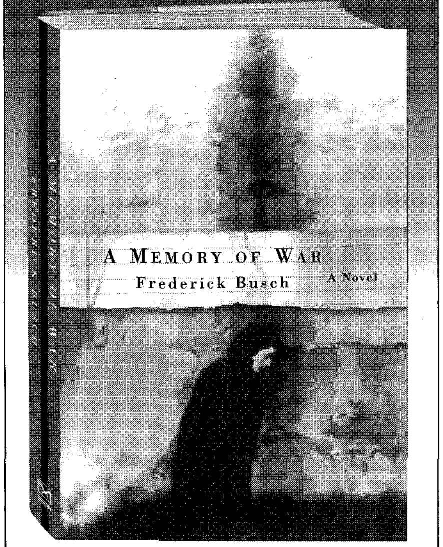

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ANNALS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

LUNCH WITH THE CHAIRMAN

Why was Richard Perle meeting with Adnan Khashoggi?

BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH

At the peak of his deal-making activities, in the nineteen-seventies, the Saudi-born businessman Adnan Khashoggi brokered billions of dollars in arms and aircraft sales for the Saudi royal family, earning hundreds of millions in commissions and fees. Though never convicted of wrongdoing, he was repeatedly involved in disputes with federal prosecutors and with the Securities and Exchange Commission, and in recent years he has been in litigation in Thailand and Los Angeles, among other places, concerning allegations of stock manipulation and fraud. During the Reagan Administration, Khashoggi was one of the middlemen between Oliver North, in the White House, and the mullahs in Iran in what became known as the Iran-Contra scandal. Khashoggi subsequently claimed that he lost ten million dollars that he had put up to obtain embargoed weapons for Iran which were to be bartered (with Presidential approval) for American hostages. The scandals of those times seemed to feed off each other: a congressional investigation revealed that Khashoggi had borrowed much of the money for the weapons from the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (B.C.C.I.), whose collapse, in 1991, defrauded thousands of depositors and led to years of inquiry and litigation.

Khashoggi is still brokering. In January of this year, he arranged a private lunch, in France, to bring together Harb Saleh al-Zuhair, a Saudi industrialist whose family fortune includes extensive holdings in construction, electronics, and engineering companies throughout the Middle East, and Richard N. Perle, the chairman of the Defense Policy Board, who is one of the most outspoken and influential American advocates of war with Iraq.

The Defense Policy Board is a Defense Department advisory group composed primarily of highly respected former government officials, retired military officers, and academics. Its members, who serve without pay, include former national-security advisers, Secretaries of Defense, and heads of the C.I.A. The board meets several times a year at the Pentagon to review and assess the country's strategic defense policies.

Perle is also a managing partner in a venture-capital company called Trireme Partners L.P., which was registered in November, 2001, in Delaware. Trireme's main business, according to a two-page letter that one of its representatives sent to Khashoggi last November, is to invest in companies dealing in technology, goods, and services that are of value to homeland security and defense. The letter argued that the fear of terrorism would increase the demand for such products in Europe and in countries like Saudi Arabia and Singapore.

The letter mentioned the firm's government connections prominently: "Three of Trireme's Management Group members currently advise the U.S. Secretary of Defense by serving on the U.S. Defense Policy Board, and one of Trireme's principals, Richard Perle, is chairman of that Board." The two other policy-board members associated with Trireme are Henry Kissinger, the former Secretary of State (who is, in fact, only a member of Trireme's advisory group and is not involved in its management), and Gerald Hillman, an investor and a close business associate of Perle's who handles matters in Trireme's New York office. The letter said that forty-five million dollars had already been raised, including twenty million dollars from Boeing; the purpose, clearly, was to attract more investors, such as Khashoggi and Zuhair.

Perle served as a foreign-policy adviser in George W. Bush's Presidential campaign—he had been an Assistant Secretary of Defense under Ronald Reagan—but he chose not to take a senior position in the Administration. In mid-2001, however, he accepted an offer from Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to chair the Defense Policy Board, a then obscure group that had been created by the Defense Department in 1985. Its members (there are around thirty of them) may be outside the government, but they have access to classified information and to senior policymakers, and give advice not only on strategic policy but also on such matters as weapons procurement. Most of the board's proceedings are confidential.

As chairman of the board, Perle is considered to be a special government employee and therefore subject to a federal Code of Conduct. Those rules bar a special employee from participating in an official capacity in any matter in which he has a financial interest. "One of the general rules is that you don't take advantage of your federal position to help yourself financially in any way," a former government attorney who helped formulate the Code of Conduct told me. The point, the attorney added, is to "protect government processes from actual or apparent conflicts."

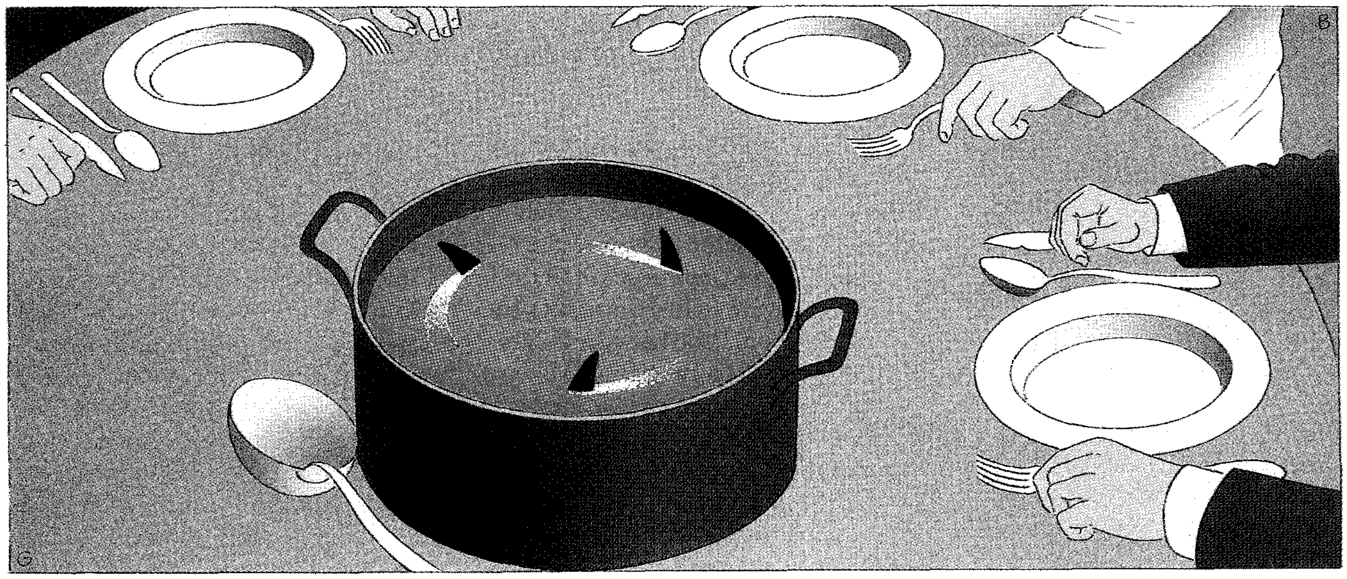
Advisory groups like the Defense Policy Board enable knowledgeable people outside government to bring their skills and expertise to bear, in confidence, on key policy issues. Because such experts are often tied to the defense industry, however, there are inevitable conflicts. One board member told me that most members are active in finance and business, and on at least one occasion a member has left a meeting when a military or an intelligence product in which he has an active interest has come under discussion.

Four members of the Defense Policy Board told me that the board, which met most recently on February 27th and 28th, had not been informed of Perle's involvement in Trireme. One board member, upon being told of Trireme and Perle's meeting with Khashoggi, exclaimed, "Oh, get out of here. He's the chairman! If you had a story about me setting up a company for homeland security, and I've put people on the board with whom I'm doing that business, I'd be had"—a reference to Gerald Hillman, who had almost no senior policy or military experience in government before being offered a post on the policy board. "Seems to me this is at the edge of or off the ethical charts. I think it would stink to high heaven."

Hillman, a former McKinsey consultant, stunned at least one board member at the February meeting when he raised questions about the validity of Iraq's existing oil contracts. "Hillman said the old contracts are bad news; he said we should kick out the Russians and the French," the board member told me. "This was a serious conversation. We'd become the brokers. Then we'd be selling futures in the Iraqi oil company. I said to myself, 'Oh, man. Don't go down that road.' " Hillman denies making such statements at the meeting.

Larry Noble, the executive director of the Washington-based Center for Responsive Politics, a nonprofit research organization, said of Perle's Trireme involvement, "It's not illegal, but it presents an appearance of a conflict. It's enough to raise questions about the advice he's giving to the Pentagon and why people in business are dealing with him." Noble added, "The question is whether he's trading off his advisory-committee relationship. If it's a selling point for the firm he's involved with, that means he's a closer—the guy you bring in who doesn't have to talk about money, but he's the reason you're doing the deal."

Perle's association with Trireme was not his first exposure to the link between high finance and high-level politics. He was born in New York City, graduated from the University of Southern California in 1964, and spent a decade in Senate-staff jobs before leaving government in 1980, to work for a military-consulting firm. The next year, he was back in government, as Assistant Secretary of Defense. In 1983, he was the subject of a New York *Times* investigation into an allegation that he recommended that the Army buy weapons from an Israeli company from whose owners he had, two years earlier, accepted a fifty-thousand-dollar fee. Perle later acknowledged that he had accepted the fee, but vigorously denied



Perle "is not a financial creature," one of his business associates said. "He doesn't have any desire for financial gain."

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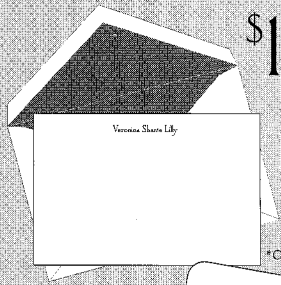

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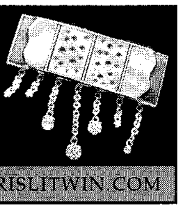

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any wrongdoing. He had not recused himself in the matter, he explained, because the fee was for work he had done before he took the Defense Department job. He added, "The ultimate issue, of course, was a question of procurement, and I am not a procurement officer." He was never officially accused of any ethical violations in the matter. Perle served in the Pentagon until 1987 and then became deeply involved in the lobbying and business worlds. Among other corporate commitments, he now serves as a director of a company doing business with the federal government: the Autonomy Corporation, a British firm that recently won a major federal contract in homeland security. When I asked him about that contract, Perle told me that there was no possible conflict, because the contract was obtained through competitive bidding, and "I never talked to anybody about it."

Under Perle's leadership, the policy board has become increasingly influential. He has used it as a bully pulpit, from which to advocate the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the use of preëmptive military action to combat terrorism. Perle had many allies for this approach, such as Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, but there was intense resistance throughout the bureaucracy—most notably at the State Department. Preëmption has since emerged as the overriding idea behind the Administration's foreign policy. One former high-level intelligence official spoke with awe of Perle's ability to "radically change government policy" even though he is a private citizen. "It's an impressive achievement that an outsider can have so much influence, and has even been given an institutional base for his influence."

Perle's authority in the Bush Administration is buttressed by close association, politically and personally, with many important Administration figures, including Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith, the Under-Secretary of Defense for Policy, who is the Pentagon's third-ranking civilian official. In 1989, Feith created International Advisors Incorporated, a lobbying firm whose main client was the government of Turkey. The firm retained Perle as an adviser between 1989 and 1994. Feith got his current position, according to a former high-level Defense Department official, only after Perle personally intervened with Rumsfeld, who was skeptical about him. Feith was directly involved in the strategic planning and conduct of the military operations against the Taliban in Afghanistan; he now runs various aspects of the planning of the Iraqi war and its aftermath. He and Perle share the same views on many foreign-policy issues. Both have been calling for Saddam Hussein's removal for years, long before September 11th. They also worked together, in 1996, to prepare a list of policy initiatives for Benjamin Netanyahu, shortly after his election as the Israeli Prime Minister. The suggestions included working toward regime change in Iraq. Feith and Perle were energetic supporters of Ahmad Chalabi, the controversial leader of the anti-Saddam Iraqi National Congress, and have struggled with officials at the State Department and the C.I.A. about the future of Iraq.

Perle has also been an outspoken critic of the Saudi government, and Americans who are in its pay. He has often publicly rebuked former American government officials who are connected to research centers and foundations that are funded by the Saudis, and told the *National Review* last summer, "I think it's a disgrace. They're the people who appear on television, they write op-ed pieces. The Saudis are a major source of the problem we face with terrorism. That would be far more obvious to people if it weren't for this community of former diplomats effectively working for this foreign government." In August, the Saudi government was dismayed when the Washington *Post* revealed that the Defense Policy Board had received a briefing on July 10th from a Rand Corporation analyst named Laurent Murawiec, who depicted Saudi Arabia as an enemy of the United States, and recommended that the Bush Administration give the Saudi government an ultimatum to stop backing terrorism or face seizure of its financial assets in the United States and its oil fields. Murawiec, it was later found, is a former editor of the *Executive Intelligence Review*, a magazine controlled by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., the perennial Presidential candidate, conspiracy theorist, and felon. According to *Time*, it was Perle himself who had invited Murawiec to make his presentation.

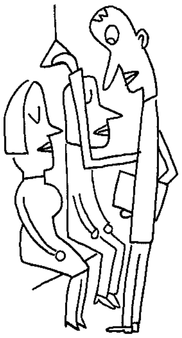
Perle's hostility to the politics of the Saudi government did not stop him from meeting with potential Saudi investors for Trireme. Khashoggi and Zuhair told me that they understood that one of Trireme's objectives was to seek the help of influential Saudis to win homeland-security contracts with the Saudi royal family for the businesses it financed. The profits for such contracts could be substantial. Saudi Arabia has spent nearly a billion dollars to survey and demarcate its eight-hundred-and-fifty-mile border with Yemen, and the second stage of that process will require billions more. Trireme apparently turned to Adnan Khashoggi for help.

Last month, I spoke with Khashoggi, who is sixty-seven and is recovering from open-heart surgery, at his penthouse apartment, overlooking the Mediterranean in Cannes. "I was the intermediary," he said. According to Khashoggi, he was first approached by a Trireme official named Christopher Harriman. Khashoggi said that Harriman, an American businessman whom he knew from his jet-set days, when both men were fixtures on the European social scene, sent him the Trireme pitch letter. (Harriman has not answered my calls.) Khashoggi explained that before Christmas he and Harb Zuhair, the Saudi industrialist, had met with Harriman and Gerald Hillman in Paris and had discussed the possibility of a large investment in Trireme.

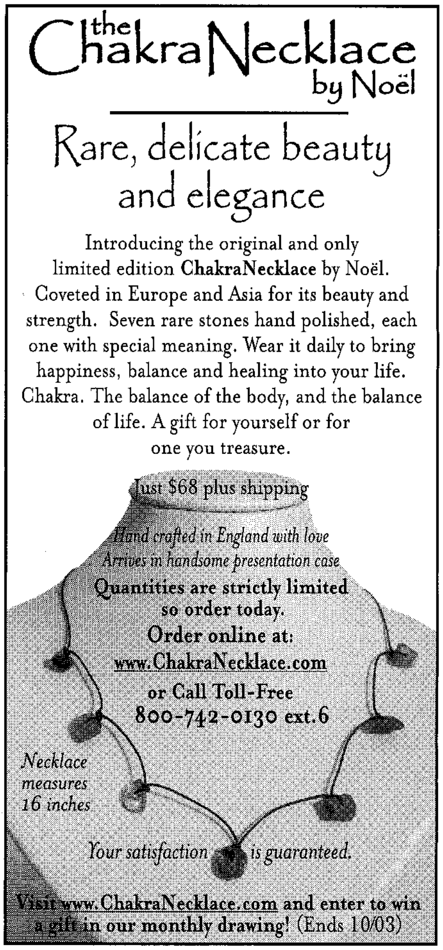
Zuhair was interested in more than the financial side; he also wanted to share his views on war and peace with someone who had influence with the Bush Administration. Though a Saudi, he had been born in Iraq, and he hoped that a negotiated, "step by step" solution could be found to avoid war. Zuhair recalls telling Harriman and Hillman, "If we have peace, it would be easy to raise a hundred million. We will bring development to the region." Zuhair's hope, Khashoggi told me, was to combine opportunities for peace with opportunities for investment. According to Khashoggi, Hillman and Harriman said that such a meeting could be arranged. Perle emerged, by virtue of his position on the policy board, as a natural catch; he was "the hook," Khashoggi said, for obtaining the investment from Zuhair. Khashoggi said that he agreed to try to assemble potential investors for a private lunch with Perle.

The lunch took place on January 3rd at a seaside restaurant in Marseilles. (Perle has a vacation home in the South of France.) Those who attended the lunch differ about its purpose. According to both Khashoggi and Zuhair, there were two items on the agenda. The first was to give Zuhair a chance to propose a peaceful alternative to war with Iraq; Khashoggi said that he and Perle knew that such an alternative was far-fetched, but Zuhair had recently returned from a visit to Baghdad, and was eager to talk about it. The second, more important item, according to Khashoggi and Zuhair, was to pave the way for Zuhair to put together a group of ten Saudi businessmen who would invest ten million dollars each in Trireme.

"It was normal for us to see Perle," Khashoggi told me. "We in the Middle East are accustomed to politicians who use their offices for whatever business they want. I organized the lunch for the purpose of Harb Zuhair to put his language to Perle. Perle politely listened, and the lunch was over." Zuhair, in a telephone conversation with me, recalled that Perle had made it clear at the lunch that "he was above the money. He said he was more involved in politics, and the business is through the company"—Trireme. Perle, throughout the lunch, "stuck to his idea that 'we have to get rid of Saddam,'" Zuhair said. As of early March, to the knowledge of Zuhair, no Saudi money had yet been invested in Trireme.



In my first telephone conversation with Gerald Hillman, in mid-February, before I knew of the involvement of Khashoggi and Zuhair, he assured me that Trireme had "nothing to do" with the Saudis. "I don't know what you can do with them," he said. "What we saw on September 11th was a grotesque manifestation of their ideology. Americans believe that the Saudis are supporting terrorism. We have no in-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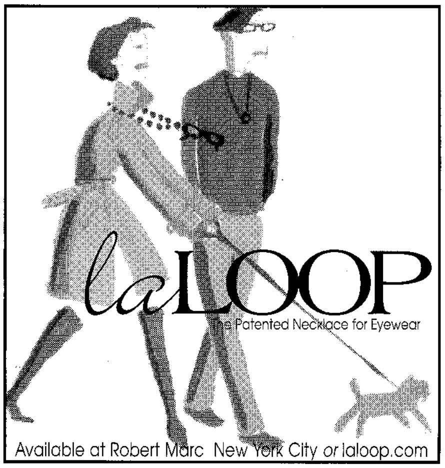
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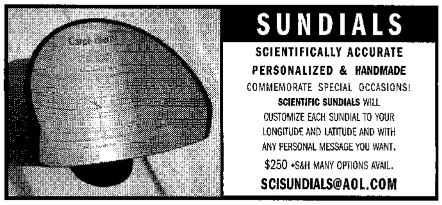
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vestment from them, or with them." (Last week, he acknowledged that he had met with Khashoggi and Zuhair, but said that the meeting had been arranged by Harriman and that he hadn't known that Zuhair would be there.) Perle, he insisted in February, "is not a financial creature. He doesn't have any desire for financial gain."

Perle, in a series of telephone interviews, acknowledged that he had met with two Saudis at the lunch in Marseilles, but he did not divulge their identities. (At that time, I still didn't know who they were.) "There were two Saudis there," he said. "But there was no discussion of Trireme. It was never mentioned and never discussed." He firmly stated, "The lunch was not about money. It just would never have occurred to me to discuss investments, given the circumstances." Perle added that one of the Saudis had information that Saddam was ready to surrender. "His message was a plea to negotiate with Saddam."

When I asked Perle whether the Saudi businessmen at the lunch were being considered as possible investors in Trireme, he replied, "I don't want Saudis as such, but the fund is open to any investor, and our European partners said that, through investment banks, they had had Saudis as investors." Both Perle and Hillman stated categorically that there were currently no Saudi investments.

Khashoggi professes to be amused by the activities of Perle and Hillman as members of the policy board. As Khashoggi saw it, Trireme's business potential depended on a war in Iraq taking place. "If there is no war," he told me, "why is there a need for security? If there is a war, of course, billions of dollars will have to be spent." He commented, "You Americans blind yourself with your high integrity and your democratic morality against peddling influence, but they *were* peddling influence."

When Perle's lunch with Khashoggi and Zuhair, and his connection to Trireme, became known to a few ranking members of the Saudi royal family, they reacted with anger and astonishment. The meeting in Marseilles left Perle, one of the kingdom's most vehement critics, exposed to a ferocious counterattack.

Prince Bandar bin Sultan, who has served as the Saudi Ambassador to the United States for twenty years, told me that he had got wind of Perle's involvement with Trireme and the lunch in Marseilles. Bandar, who is in his early fifties, is a prominent member of the royal family (his father is the defense minister). He said that he was told that the contacts between Perle and Trireme and the Saudis were purely business, on all sides. After the 1991 Gulf War, Bandar told me, Perle had been involved in an unsuccessful attempt to sell security systems to the Saudi government, "and this company does security systems." (Perle confirmed that he had been on the board of a company that attempted to make such a sale but said he was not directly involved in the project.)

"There is a split personality to Perle," Bandar said. "Here he is, on the one hand, trying to make a hundred-million-dollar deal, and, on the other hand, there were elements of the appearance of blackmail—'If we get in business, he'll back off on Saudi Arabia'—as I have been informed by participants in the meeting."

As for Perle's meeting with Khashoggi and Zuhair, and the assertion that its purpose was to discuss politics, Bandar said, "There has to be deniability, and a cover story—a possible peace initiative in Iraq—is needed. I believe the Iraqi events are irrelevant. A business meeting took place."

Zuhair, however, was apparently convinced that, thanks to his discussions with Trireme, he would have a chance to enter into a serious discussion with Perle about peace. A few days after the meeting in Paris, Hillman had sent Khashoggi a twelve-point memorandum, dated December 26, 2002, setting the conditions that Iraq would have to meet. "*It is my belief*," the memorandum stated, "that if the United States obtained the following results it would not go to war against Iraq." Saddam would have to admit that "Iraq has developed, and possesses, weapons of mass destruction." He then would be allowed to resign and leave Iraq immediately,

TO THE BOOK

Go on then
in your own time
this is as far
as I will take you
I am leaving your words with you
as though they had been yours
all the time

of course you are not finished
how can you be finished
when the morning begins again
or the moon rises
even the words are not finished
though they may claim to be

never mind
I will not be
listening when they say
how you should be
different in some way
you will be able to tell them
that the fault was all mine

whoever I was
when I made you up

—*W. S. Merwin*

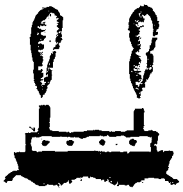
with his sons and some of his ministers.

Hillman sent Khashoggi a second memorandum a week later, the day before the lunch with Perle in Marseilles. "Following our recent discussions," it said, "we have been thinking about an immediate test to ascertain that Iraq is sincere in its desire to surrender." Five more steps were outlined, and an ambitious final request was made: that Khashoggi and Zuhair arrange a meeting with Prince Nawaf Abdul Aziz, the Saudi intelligence chief, "so that we can assist in Washington."

Both Khashoggi and Zuhair were skeptical of the memorandums. Zuhair found them "absurd," and Khashoggi told me that he thought they were amusing, and almost silly. "This was their thinking?" he recalled asking himself. "There was nothing to react to. While Harb was lobbying for Iraq, they were lobbying for Perle."

In my initial conversation with Hillman, he said, "Richard had nothing to do with the writing of those letters. I informed him of it afterward, and he never said one word, even after I sent them to him. I thought my ideas were pretty clear, but I didn't think Saddam would resign and I didn't think he'd go into exile. I'm positive Richard does not believe that any of those things would happen." Hillman said that he had drafted the memorandums with the help of his daughter, a college student. Perle, for his part, told me, "I didn't write them and didn't supply any content to them. I didn't know about them until after they were drafted."

The views set forth in the memorandums were, indeed, very different from those held by Perle, who has said publicly that Saddam will leave office only if he is forced out, and from those of his fellow hard-liners in the Bush Administration. Given Perle's importance in American decision-making, and the risks of relying on a deal-maker with Adnan Khashoggi's history, questions remain about Hillman's drafting of such an amateurish peace proposal for Zuhair. Prince Bandar's assertion—that the talk of peace was merely a pretext for some hard selling—is difficult to dismiss.



Hillman's proposals, meanwhile, took on an unlikely life of their own. A month after the lunch, the proposals made their way to *Al Hayat*, a Saudi-owned newspaper published in London. If Perle had ever intended to dissociate himself from them, he did not succeed. The newspaper, in a dispatch headlined "WASHINGTON OFFERS TO AVERT WAR IN RETURN FOR AN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT TO EXILE SADDAM," characterized Hillman's memorandums as "American" documents and said that the new proposals bore Perle's imprimatur. The paper said that Perle and others had attended a series of "secret meetings" in an effort to avoid the pending war with Iraq, and "a scenario was discussed whereby Saddam Hussein would personally admit that his country was attempting to acquire weapons of mass destruction and he would agree to stop trying to acquire these weapons while he awaits exile."

A few days later, the Beirut daily *Al Safir* published Arabic translations of the memorandums themselves, attributing them to Richard Perle. The proposals were said to have been submitted by Perle, and to "outline Washington's future visions of Iraq." Perle's lunch with two Saudi businessmen was now elevated by *Al Safir* to a series of "recent American-Saudi negotiations" in which "the American side was represented by Richard Perle." The newspaper added, "Publishing these documents is important because they shed light on the story of how war could have been avoided." The documents, of course, did nothing of the kind.

When Perle was asked whether his dealings with Trireme might present the appearance of a conflict of interest, he said that anyone who saw such a conflict would be thinking "maliciously." But Perle, in crisscrossing between the public and the private sectors, has put himself in a difficult position—one not uncommon to public men. He is credited with being the intellectual force behind a war that not everyone wants and that many suspect, however unfairly, of being driven by American business interests. There is no question that Perle believes that removing Saddam from power is the right thing to do. At the same time, he has set up a company that may gain from a war. In doing so, he has given ammunition not only to the Saudis but to his other ideological opponents as well. ♦

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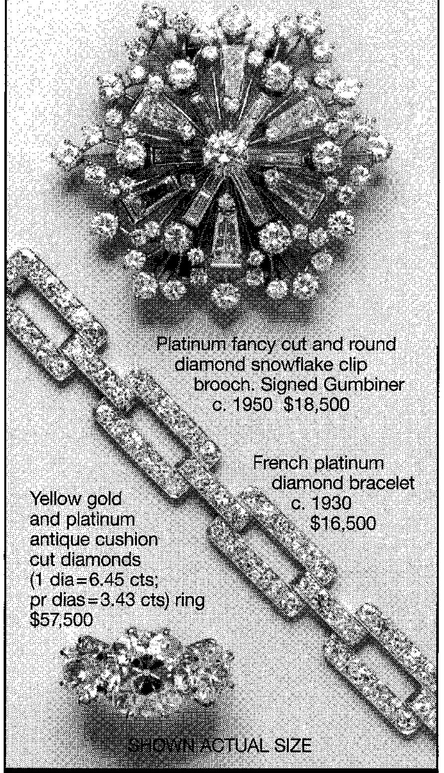

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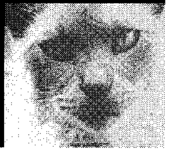

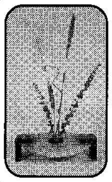

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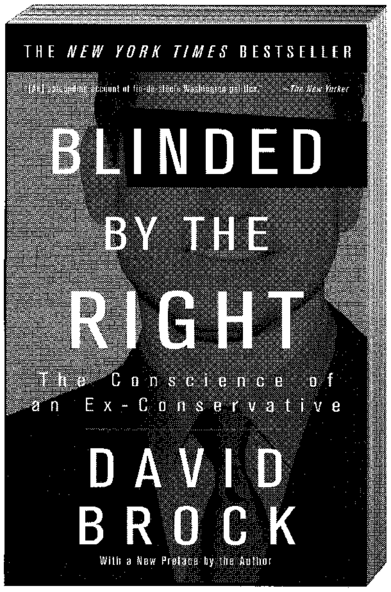
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LETTER FROM BRAZIL

DRESSING FOR LULA

In a heavily fortified boutique, São Paulo's richest women shop on.

BY REBECCA MEAD

It was hard, in the weeks before the landslide victory last October of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the left-wing candidate in Brazil's recent Presidential election, to find anyone who was very enthusiastic about his opponent, José Serra. Serra was a well-regarded economist and former health minister whose record of public service was accompanied by a deficit of charisma so severe that even his supporters noted his physical resemblance to Uncle Fester of the Addams Family. It was hard to find support for Serra, but not impossible, and a good place to look was within the cream-colored, heavily guarded walls of Daslu, a women's clothing store in a wealthy residential district of São Paulo. The store—which is windowless and has clusters of unsmiling security guards standing at its entrances, as if it were the embassy of a particularly beleaguered nation—caters to rich Brazilians, members of the ten per cent of the population who command nearly half the national income, and wear Chanel, Valentino, or Dolce & Gabbana. The Daslu customer does not speak in the voice of the man or woman on the street, not least because Daslu customers don't actually walk on the street but are driven around in Mercedeses that have been equipped with bulletproof windows and armored panels and, in some cases, gun-carrying chauffeurs. So, with the inevitable victory of Lula, as the new President is known, drawing near, the political chatter in the store ran to resigned humor at the dark days to come.

Six days before the election, a customer named Ruthinha Malzoni was at Daslu, making her selections from the designer collections that had just arrived from Europe. Malzoni is one of the city's better-known society figures, on account of her striking beauty, her startling agelessness, her personal charm, and her svelte aplomb when it comes to wearing the latest designer creations. She had arrived at the store wearing a white silk Dolce & Gabbana tailored suit and a vividly colored bustier by Dior, a massive crucifix of Brazilian gems resting on a cantilevered bosom, and had settled into a curtained area with a rackful of clothes and a small gaggle of salesgirls, who rushed back and forth with armfuls of finery. Every so often, a maid in a black dress with a white lace collar and cuffs would appear with a tray, offering cups of espresso and glasses of water.

The real had slipped to its lowest point yet, almost four to the dollar; but the nation's financial crisis did not appear to be having any effect on Malzoni's life style. She didn't need to try on any Chanel outfits, she said, because she'd been in Paris a month earlier, staying at the Plaza Athénée, and had been unable to resist popping across the street to the Chanel boutique. She was in the market for clothes for a New Year's trip to Hawaii, though she declared the gauzy four-and-a-half-thousand-real Blumarine dress she tried on for that purpose to be ugly. "I look like I could be taking care of children in this dress," she said. More to her liking was a fifteen-thousand-real beaver-fur bomber jacket by Dolce & Gabbana that could be worn only in the cold Northern Hemisphere, and a seven-thousand-real sequinned skirt by Blumarine that could be worn only after dark. Stripped to a thong and hopping in and out of outfits as swiftly as if she were playing a dozen characters in a one-woman show, she also purchased a black Valentino pants suit that tied in front, a bias-cut Prada skirt, a pair of velvet pants from Chloé, and a pair of high-heeled Dolce & Gabbana sandals that were adorned with enough dangling jewels to equip a chandelier.

Malzoni and her husband live in an apartment in a modern, high-security high-rise in São Paulo which has the atmosphere of a Parisian mansion from a more gracious era, with heavy swag curtains and antiqued mirror panels and gray-painted walls hung with twentieth-century Brazilian art. The Malzonis spend their weekends at the family "farm," an estate an hour outside São Paulo. Their large mansard-roofed house faces a lake and is surrounded by an eighteen-hole golf course, built to Paulo Malzoni's design. Paulo, who is Malzoni's third husband, develops shopping malls in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, but Ruthinha comes from a political family—her father was a senator, and her grandfather was the governor of a southern Brazilian state.

"I don't think we're going to have as many parties as we have clothes once Lula is elected," she said, trying on a pair of black-and-gold evening pants. "The husbands are all going to be too upset for parties." Either that or the parties would be ones she couldn't bring herself to go to—like the fund-raiser for Lula a week earlier, which the Malzonis had declined to attend. The host was an industrialist who appeared to nurture hopes of a position in the new government; his wife was thought to have her eye on an ambassadorship in Paris or Rome. "I heard that when Lula thanked the hostess at the end of the evening he addressed her as 'Compañero,' " Malzoni said, shuddering. One of the salesgirls brought out a dramatic Galliano dress with a daring gash across the front, exposing cleavage and the underside of one breast. The dress was deep red, the color that had been on the Socialist billboards and flags all over São Paulo that season, and Malzoni shrieked when she saw it. "This red one is the Lula dress!" she said. She wriggled into it, examined herself from all angles, and said, "Oh, we have to pray for the guy to be eliminated by an angel."

The Lula dress turned out not to be a good fit—"For this you need big boobs and a permissive husband," Malzoni said. Instead, she tried on a narrow black Galliano gown with a thick, low-slung belt in bright colors. "Now all I need are parties to go to, and a country happy enough for us to go dancing," she said.

Ruthinha Malzoni at Daslu, where the salesgirls come from the same social class as the customers. Photograph by Gillian Laub.

Brazil is a country of huge economic disparities, in which the poorest forty per cent of the population command only eight per cent of the wealth, and those in the richest tier are as pampered as the nobility in pre-Revolutionary France. The Malzonis employ, in their two homes, ten household workers, including a man who looks after the golf course and its enormous clubhouse. (The sitting room of the clubhouse is hung with photographs of golfing visitors to the Malzoni farm, such as Bill Clinton and Anthony Hopkins. Holding pride of place is a vintage photograph showing Fidel Castro, Raul Castro, and Che Guevara playing golf.) The rich make semi-annual shopping trips to Europe, timed to coincide with the arrival of the new fall and spring clothes. Wealthy Brazilians keep homes in Florida, and shuttle back and forth to New York as easily as a busy Brooklyn congressman—though the Malzonis have not been to New York since September 11, 2001, for fear of further terrorist attacks. They did visit Las Vegas last year, where they were obliged to submit to security checks. "They made me take off my Jimmy Choo shoes!" Ruthinha recalled. "The soles on those are so thin you couldn't fit a bomb in there!"

Within the precincts of the wealthy in São Paulo, Daslu is an institution, a provider of necessities to those who want for nothing. It was founded forty-five years ago by Lucia Piva de Albuquerque, the wife of a well-to-do lawyer, who started out by selling fashionable clothes to her friends in her home, donating part of the proceeds to charity. Lucia, an abbreviation of which provided the name for the store, died nineteen years ago, and was succeeded by her daughter Eliana Tranchesi, under whose direction the store has metastasized, engulfing an entire row of houses that have been joined together to form a warren of interconnected salons stuffed with merchandise, all hidden behind the bunker-like exterior wall.

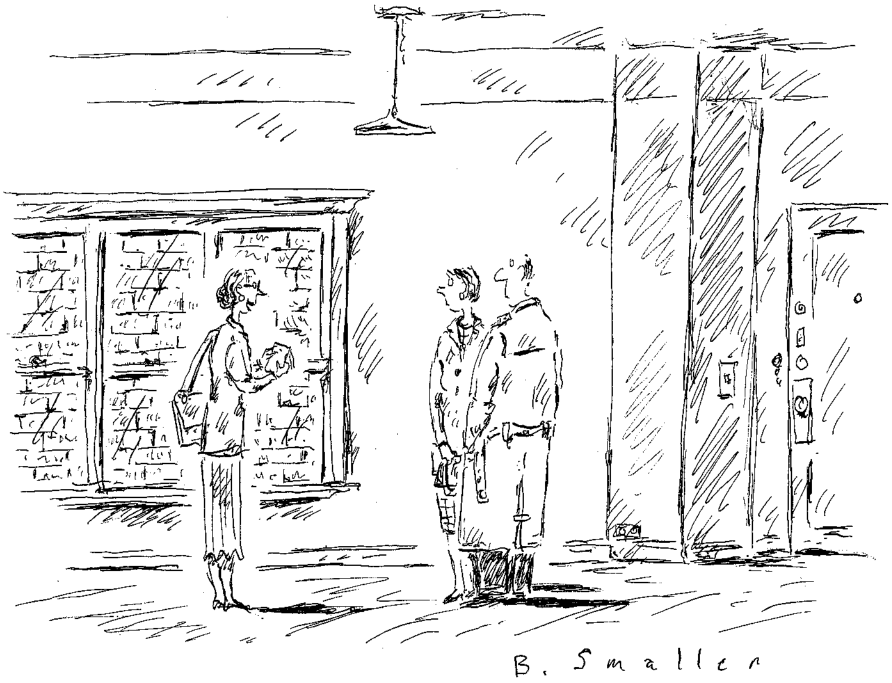
For rich residents of São Paulo, all of life is conducted indoors, since it's only at private homes or in the right restaurants or stores that it is safe to wear a watch or jewelry; and Daslu—with its plushly furnished anteroom, where there are couches and book-piled coffee tables and sprays of orchids, and its racks of pretty clothes—is a universe of luxury largely insulated from the outside world. (Insulated, that is, except when the intrusion of that world is unavoidable, such as the time in 1990 when inflation rates of eighty per cent in one month rendered price tags on the clothes meaningless, because a gown would cost one amount in the morning and another by the end of the afternoon.) Daslu's Chanel shop has one of the highest turnovers per square foot of any Chanel store in the world; in the Prada department, shoes in all sizes and colors are piled on racks, as if they were in a very expensive branch of Payless.

Because the store consists of small rooms that once belonged to real houses, it feels intimate, but, at eleven thousand square feet, it is enormous. Part of that space is dedicated to international designers; the larger section is taken up with clothes sold under Daslu's own label: gauzy tops and low-cut jeans and fringed skirts and strappy beaded evening dresses. The Daslu collection is arranged by color—a khaki room, a pink room—so as to ease outfit coördination and more perfectly contrive the Daslu look, which is sexy and flirty and young, even when the women wearing the clothes sometimes share none of those characteristics.

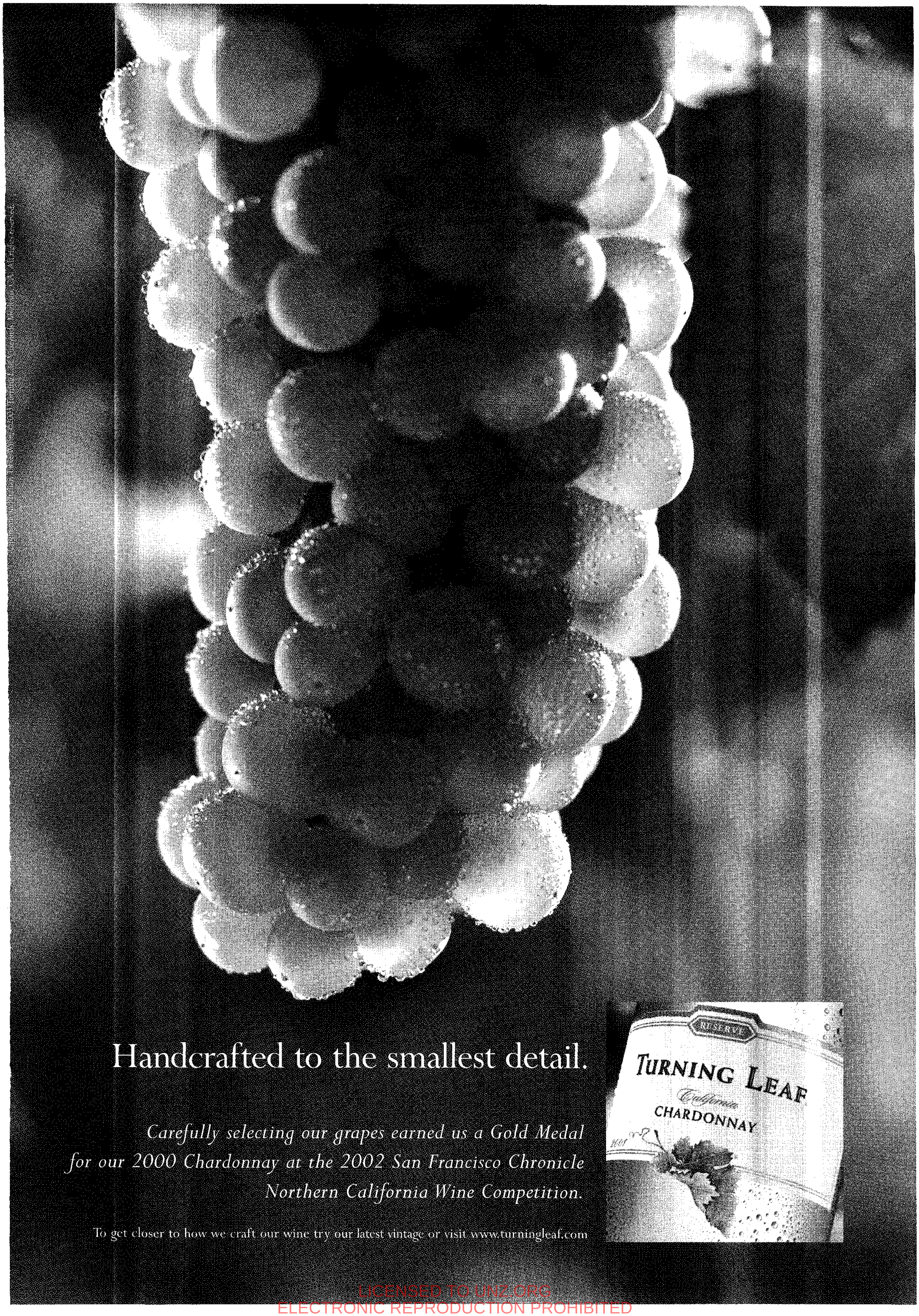
The inside of Daslu has an even more rarefied character than most São Paulo environments, since not only the poor are excluded but also the men. Because there are no dressing rooms, men are not permitted beyond the coffee bar and the cash registers. On a busy day, the aisles are filled with women, from teen-agers to matrons, in various stages of undress and having undergone varying degrees of ingenious trussing, their undergarments ranging from what look like flesh-colored bike shorts to a pair of Nippits, a kind of disk-shaped Band-Aid that is plastered over the nipple, permitting its wearer to go braless without sacrificing the Barbie-doll-like regularity of form that is the Brazilian ideal.

The customers, who come from what are unflinchingly referred to as the best families, are attended by glossy-looking salesgirls from the same social class: Daslu functions as a kind of finishing school for the daughters of the rich and powerful in São Paulo; it is as if Bergdorf Goodman were staffed by the Hilton sisters and the Bush girls. Among the current Dasluzetes, as the salesgirls are called, are Sofia Alckmin, whose father has just been reëlected governor of the State of São Paulo, and who missed a day of work just before the election, after armed assailants attacked her brother's car and killed one of his bodyguards. The grunt work of the store is done by an army of maids, who commute each day from the poor, outlying districts of São Paulo to fold clothes and serve coffee.

Eight years ago, Tranchesi opened Daslu Homem, a men's store, across the street. It carries Zegna, Burberry, and many other European labels. The same building houses the Daslu Home collection; Daslu for kids, with tiny Tod's



"The view is all prewar brick."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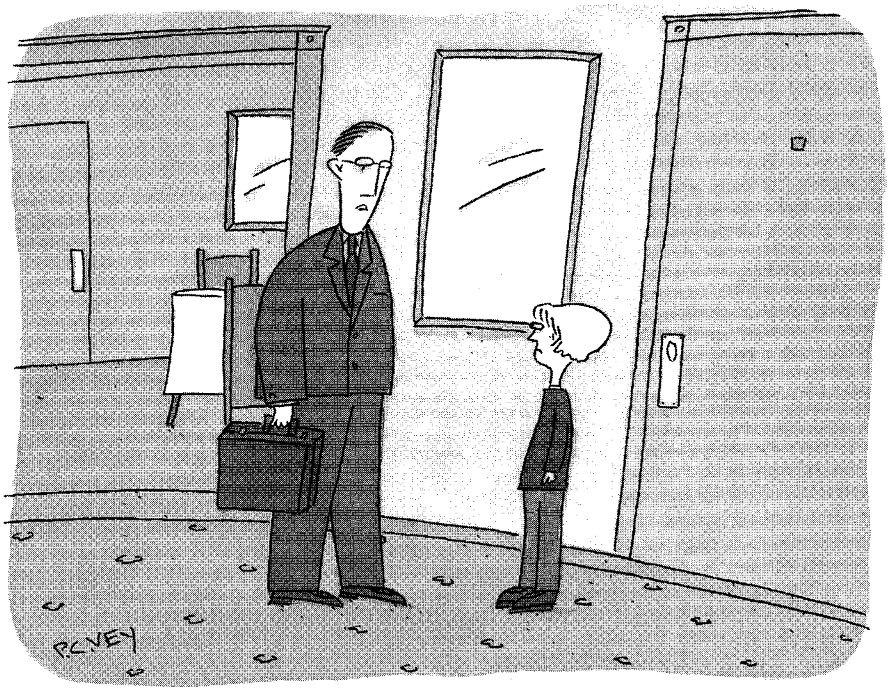


"Daddy's going off to defeat terrorism in subtler, economic ways."

• •

shoes and scaled-down Dolce & Gabbana leather jackets; and Daslu for pets, with coördinating leashes and canine sweaters. There's a bookstore of imported books, mostly concerned with international travel and design; several jewellers selling Brazilian gems; a wine store run by Tranchesi's brother, who is Brazil's largest importer of wine; a chocolate shop run by Tranchesi's sister-in-law; and a real-estate desk, where Daslu customers can find apartments to rent in Paris, London, and Rome.

Tranchesi has become one of the most prominent businesswomen in Brazil. (She and her three children are accompanied at all times by a pair of bodyguards apiece, so great is the fear of kidnapping.) Daslu has become a favorite destination for international fashion types, including Naomi Campbell and Mario Testino. Tranchesi, a divorcée, is forty-seven years old, with blond hair and a dewy complexion; she is admired in equal measure for her kindness and her shrewdness. Three days before Lula's Workers' Party, known as the P.T. party, swept the election, she sat in her cream-colored office, on the second floor of the store, and said, "We have always been expanding at Daslu. I have always been listening to my father, who says, 'This will be a year of crisis. Take care, this will be a hard year.' And instead we have always been increasing and increasing."

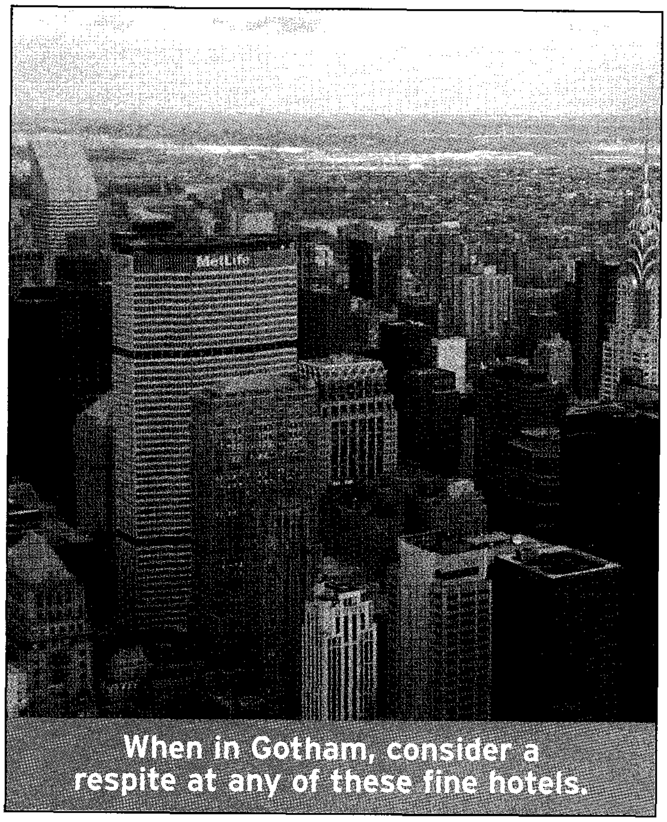
The poorest people of São Paulo live in the favelas, sprawling shantytowns, pitched into corners of cities. Many inhabitants make do without basic services, and the rule of law is that exercised by drug dealers. One of the consequences of the Third World condition of much of Brazil is that labor is cheap: the minimum wage is two hundred and ten reals (about sixty dollars) a month. Among the items available at Daslu is a tan leather vest punched with decorative holes that was made in one of the favelas in Rio de Janeiro, where dense villages perch precariously on the city's mountainsides. Daslu's own collection, which is created by a team of sixteen designers working to Eliana Tranchesi's specifications, is far cheaper than those from the international designers but is still beyond the reach of any but the wealthiest. A pair of velvet cargo pants costs 300 reals, which would be about a third of the monthly salary of the average Brazilian schoolteacher.

Among the best customers of the store are the salesgirls, who, for the most part, would not need their salaries to pay the rent even if they did not live in their parents' comfortable homes. "We go out a lot, and we see new clothes every day, and it's hard not to buy," one of them, Carolina Nunes, explained, while hanging out by the Chanel bags, checking her beeper occasionally to see whether a lawyer customer had shown up for her appointment yet. Nunes is a tall, slender, tan twenty-six-year-old whose father sells apartments in São Paulo, whose mother owns a chain of bistros, and whose boyfriend is an international sailing champion, a calling that requires Nunes to put in considerable time at the Rio de Janeiro yacht club. "We go to the beach every weekend, so we buy a new bikini every weekend," she said. "And we love sandals. At least half the money we make we spend on clothes." The previous day, she'd bought an eight-hundred-real suède jacket moments after it arrived in the store, as had a number of other salesgirls, and that afternoon the jacket kept parading by, accessorized in different ways—open over a skintight white tank top on one girl, tied modishly around the hips of another.

Like every Dasluzete, Nunes has a roster of personal clients; she earns a commission on every sale. Sometimes she is extremely busy, as when a customer from northern Brazil flies in for a day of shopping and orders the same Valentino sweater in four colors, or when the new Daslu collections arrive and the store is as crowded as Filene's Basement on sale day. At other times, Nunes might wait an entire afternoon for a client, lounging on the couch by the store's coffee counter with other underemployed Dasluzetes, as if they were high-end call girls killing time before a date.

The salesgirls also appear in the Daslu magazine, a catalogue that is sent to regular shoppers six times a year and that features photo spreads of the clothes, in addition to stories about the social lives of the Dasluzetes. A recent issue included an article about the trip Carolina Nunes and four other girls took to Turkey, where they were photographed in long white skirts and turquoise pendants outside Hagia Sophia. Four days after Lula's election, photographs for the Christmas edition of the magazine were shot at Eliana Tranchesi's home, a handsome Italianate mansion in an exclusive hilly district

NEW YORK GETAWAYS



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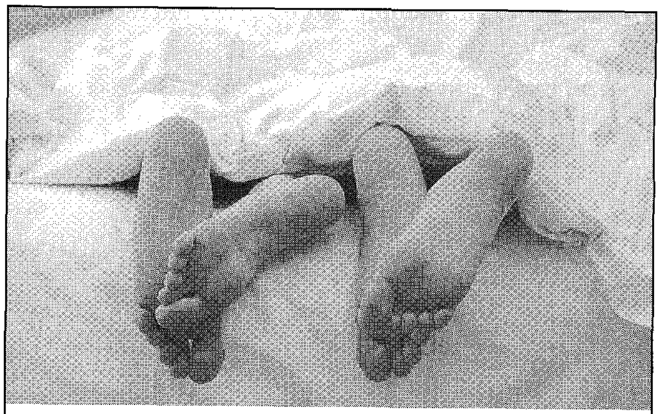

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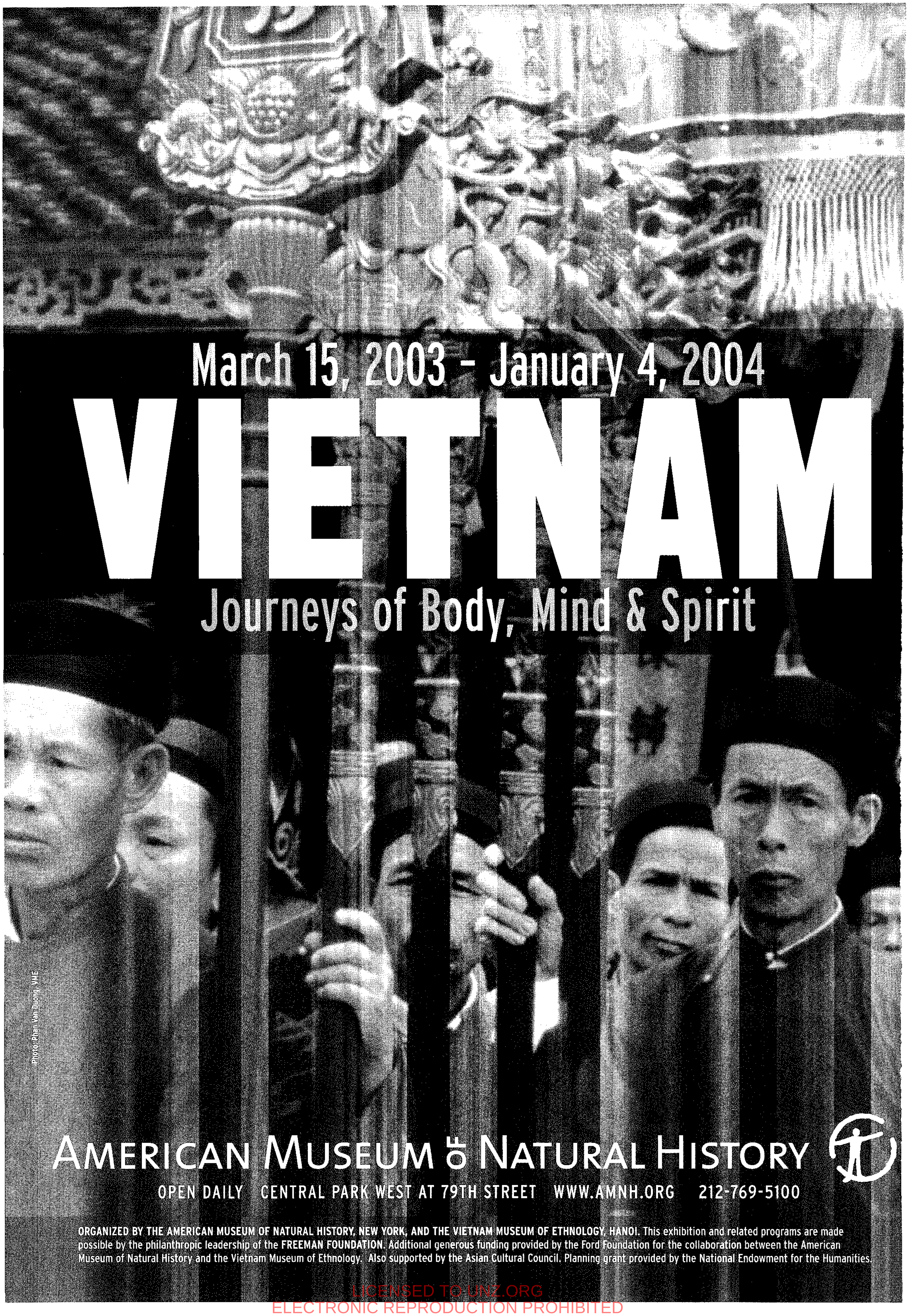

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of São Paulo, which had been decked out with a massive Christmas tree surrounded by gifts, urns stuffed with roses, and tables laden with bowls of apples. Thousands of rose petals had been scattered over the swimming pool and were floating on the water's surface like a velvety coverlet.

By early evening, after many rolls of film and many bottles of champagne, some of the Dasluzetes had crashed on the white couches of a sitting room, where they huddled under silky blankets and chatted, while, on the large flat-screen TV, the evening news reported that the real had held steady and was even increasing in value against the dollar. A staff member of the magazine passed through and said to them, "You look like something from a favela!" The roses in the urns would be donated to a foundation begun by Mrs. Maria Lúcia Alckmin, the Governor's wife. Mrs. Alckmin had sought to find a way to make use of the leftover flowers from state functions, as well as from the private parties and weddings of her friends. She had established flower-arranging classes for residents of the favelas, so that they might be equipped to find work with one of São Paulo's florists.

A few days before the election, an e-mail began circulating in São Paulo which contained an image of Lula after a digital makeover. His grizzled beard and thatch of gray hair were tinted to a perfect blond, his weathered skin was smooth and tan, his eyes were sky blue, he wore a handsome blue suit and red tie, and the image was captioned "Daslula—O Candidato Perfeito."

The satire referred to the transformation that Lula, a metalworker turned trade-union leader, had undergone in terms of both appearance and politics in the run-up to the election, which was his fourth attempt at the Presidency. He exchanged his workingman's shirtsleeves for tailored suits (which, it was rumored among the salesgirls at Daslu, he had bought at the Zegna store in Daslu Homem) and began promoting a notably less radical political program, forging alliances with Brazilian industrialists. Lula's victory was a cause for celebration on a par with Brazil's triumph in the World Cup earlier in the year, and on Election Day, a Sunday, the main commercial street in São Paulo, Avenida Paulista, was filled with cars cruising up and down, the drivers honking their horns while gleeful back-seat occupants brandished enormous P.T. flags from the car windows and Lula-supporting pedestrians danced by the roadside.

To the poor, Lula had promised improved health-care, education, and unemployment benefits. The social system that generally prevails in Brazil, however, is one of noblesse oblige, in which the wealthy take care of the individuals in their personal employ. The rich consider this to be an absolute duty, though they tend not to see a similar obligation to submit to a fairer distribution of wealth on a national scale. Wealthy Brazilians often speak of their servants as being like members of the family. This does not mean, for example, that the houseboy at the Malzoni farm sits down to eat with the Malzonis, but it does mean that Ruthinha Malzoni continues to keep her son's former nanny on the payroll, complete with health benefits, even though her son is now twenty-five years old. For poor Brazilians, a steady job with an employer who will help pay for your children's education, help you find a job for a cousin or a sister, and step in should you have emergency medical bills has always been a more effective route to personal betterment than waiting for economic and political reform.

For this reason, the maids' positions at Daslu are as highly coveted as the salesgirls' positions, though by a notably different demographic; the head of staff of the maids, for example, is a woman of thirty-six whose first job, at the age of twelve, was as a nanny. There are a hundred and twenty maids at the store, and their role is to operate as support staff for the salesgirls—though it is generally acknowledged that the maids, who work full time rather than the six-hour shifts of the salesgirls, are far more familiar with the store's merchandise. (Their official title is "assistant," but they are known by the affectionate diminutive *aventalzinho*, or "little apron.") Unlike the salesgirls, the maids receive no commission; their salary is two thousand reals a month, and benefits include medical and dental care. Each month, they are also given a basket of staple

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Some years ago, after the fifteen-year-old son of one maid was shot to death by drug dealers, Eliana Tranchesi founded an educational program for the children of her employees, using money she received as a birthday gift. At a private school nearby, Tranchesi pays the fees of fifty or so Daslu children. She has also established her own day-care center, just around the corner from the store, where babies as young as four months can be installed. Some Dasluzetes volunteer their services at the center, schooling a half-dozen four-year-olds in basic English or conducting a ballet class in which six or eight little girls totter around in pink tutus bought with funds donated by the salesgirls.

The maids are distinguished from the Dasluzetes not merely by skin color—lower income tends to correlate with darker complexions in Brazil—but by their outfits, which are a version of the uniform traditionally worn by domestic help: a black short-sleeved dress worn with white tights and flat white shoes. Within the store, the maids are always at work, folding sweaters or rehanging dresses; unlike the salesgirls, they are not permitted to sit on any of the chairs or sofas in the store. When a salesgirl is at work with a client, characterizing the chicness of this Gucci shoe or that Prada bag, the maids hover nearby, ready to procure a needed item, in the manner of nurses attending a surgeon performing a delicate operation.

The maids are not supposed to address the clients, and are not in the habit of socializing with the salesgirls, since they take their breaks in a building across the street, while the salesgirls have a private lounge inside the store. Still, fraternization of a sort does occur. "When something new comes into the store, the maids say to us, 'Please put it on, we want to see how it looks,' " Carolina Nunes said. Within Daslu, it is regarded as evidence of Eliana Tranchesi's lack of snobbishness that, at the Christmas party she gives for all the staff, she dances with the man in charge of the store's valet parking.

Nancy Tonello, one of Daslu's longest-serving maids, used to be a seamstress and speaks of working at Daslu as a privilege. "I got to know a whole world that is very different from the outside world, and I was enchanted," she said one day. "What is interesting about rich people is that they have a whole tradition—their families, and everything." Exposure to the customers has been an education for Tonello, who is fifty. "We can't go abroad every three months, but we can listen to them describing their trips," she said. "I have seen their behavior—small details, like how they take their coffee—and I have changed my own behavior because of that."

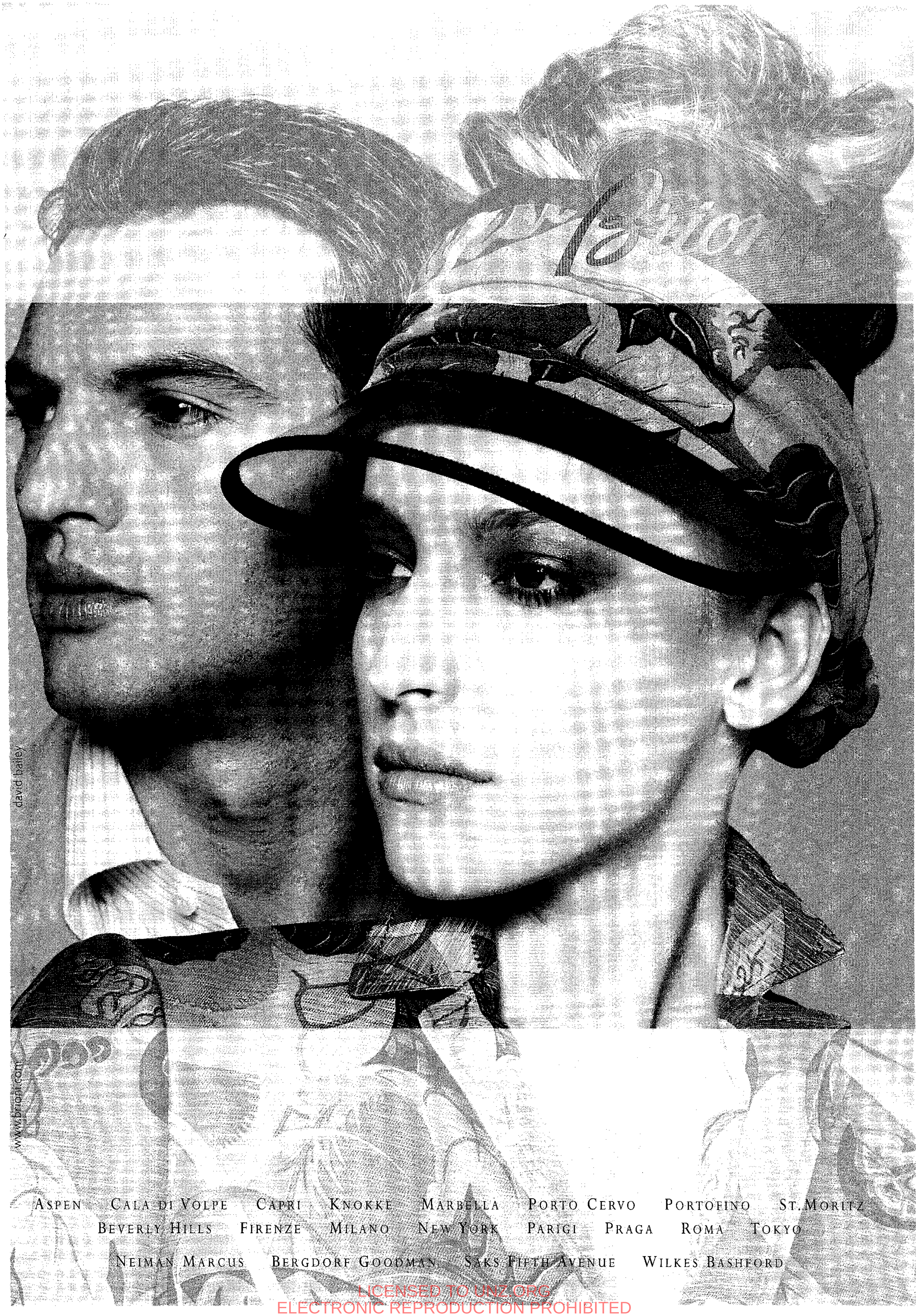
Tonello said that the maids did not resent the rich for having so much more than they did. "When we begin working here, we are taught to understand the differences between people—that some people have money, and that we shouldn't mind that, because that is the only way the store can exist," she said. After starting at Daslu eleven years ago, Tonello has worked her way up to assistant in the imported-lingerie department. There was, Tonello said, no higher position to which she could be promoted. At Daslu, no maid has ever become a salesgirl; though there is no house rule forbidding the possibility, it has never occurred to the management to propose such a promotion, and it has never occurred to any maid to ask for one.

What the coming political changes in Brazil mean for Daslu is still unclear, but so far, Tranchesi says, Brazil's economic problems have had no impact on the buying habits of her customers. "In Brazil, it is very hard to give up clothes," Tranchesi said a few days after the election. In fact, because the wealthy are not foolish enough to keep their money in reals, they have been able to take advantage of bargain prices, thanks to the exchange rate. "I think we are going to have a year of recession, and what happens to our client is that she doesn't feel the lack of money, but she feels the atmosphere," Tranchesi said.

Tranchesi's most immediate political problem is a more parochial one. The block on which Daslu sits is zoned for residential use only, and in recent years a neighborhood association has been protesting the expansion of the store. A week before the election, the *Folha de São Paulo* reported that it had been determined that Daslu was in violation of the zoning laws, and that, in spite of repeated efforts over the years by the store's powerful supporters to insure that it could continue business, Tranchesi had finally been given five days to close. That closure was postponed—Tranchesi said that it was never a serious proposition—but this spring a judge will rule on whether the São Paulo zoning laws are outdated, as Tranchesi and her supporters claim. Meanwhile, Tranchesi has been visiting with residents' groups, pointing out the benefits of having her establishment in the neighborhood; for instance, on the blocks immediately surrounding Daslu, crime has dropped to zero, an unheard-of figure in São Paulo, and one that, Tranchesi argues, more than compensates for the double-parked Mercedeses at her door.

The future of the store was one of the topics of conversation at a lunch that Ruthinha Malzoni shared, at her São Paulo apartment, with her longtime friend Kika Rivetti a few days after the election. Rivetti, too, runs a boutique, called Eclat, and she met Malzoni in the late sixties at a party, at which they found themselves wearing the same Zandra Rhodes dress. As lunch was served—champagne and pasta infused with bits of truffle, packets of which Malzoni had brought back from Paris—the two friends discussed the latest news in the gossip columns. A recent item described a dinner party given by a woman who suspected her husband of having an affair and had seated him opposite the woman in question, first sprinkling the floor under the table with talcum powder. "When he stood up, he had little white footprints all over his pants!" Malzoni said.

They talked about the report on Daslu in the *Folha de São Paulo,* and won-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dered whether the fact that the mayor of São Paulo, Marta Suplicy, was a Daslu customer would help Eliana Tranchesi in her bid to stay put, or whether Suplicy, a member of Lula's P.T. party, would not want to be seen doing anything to help the rich. Rivetti had gone to the fund-raising party for Lula that Malzoni had declined to attend. She had been impressed by Lula, in spite of herself. "If he does half of what he says he's going to do, it will be good," she said.

"If he does a third of what he says he's going to do," Malzoni said, skeptically.

"It's time for a change in Brazil," Rivetti replied. "But don't think I voted for him, my dear."

When the real started its descent against the dollar last year, Tranchesi's established practice of buying designer clothes in France and Italy and New York suddenly became a lot more difficult. Fifty per cent of Daslu's revenues are generated from imported goods, and Tranchesi has been forced to strike deals with her European suppliers to stagger her payments for the fifty thousand pieces she imports every year. "They are understanding, and are giving us more days to pay," she said.

But she has also decided that she must start bringing dollars into the business; this spring, for the first time, a small selection of Daslu clothes will be available in high-end boutiques around the world. No New York store has picked them up, though they will be for sale at Saks, in Chevy Chase, Maryland; Browns, in London; and Villa Moda in Kuwait, among other locations. The decision to export was a last-minute one. "We decided to do it in August, when the dollar started going up," Tranchesi said.

One Saturday, Tranchesi was invited to a casual lunch for a few friends at the home of Nizan Guanaes, a well-known adman in São Paulo who had worked on the doomed campaign of José Serra. Guanaes lives not far from Daslu in an elegant house surrounded by high walls, at which guests must check in with a guard before passing through two heavy, clanking gates. In a month's time, Guanaes was to marry Tranchesi's right-hand woman at Daslu, Donata Meirelles, and Tranchesi was to be Meirelles's maid of honor. The wedding would be a big event on the São Paulo social calendar, and many of the choicest clothes at Daslu were hung with tags that read, "Don't sell to anyone for Donata's wedding," indicating that another customer had claimed the outfit. The planning for the wedding was still incomplete, and Meirelles wanted her guests to help her decide which chocolates would be offered at the reception; so after lunch had been served and everyone had retired to a table in the garden for coffee, a large box of fancy chocolates was added to the dessert offerings that had already been set out by a servant—a platter piled with slices of fresh fruit, and a large crystal bowl filled with scoops of mango, chocolate, and strawberry ice cream.

Guanaes, helping himself to dessert, said that Serra would have been a good President but was a terrible candidate. The country had been on the right economic track, and would have continued that way with Serra, and though public support for Lula was hardly surprising, it was misguided. "Look at me—I am fat," he said. "When I am on a diet, all my vital signs are better, but I feel miserable. That is what it has been like for the country."

The conversation turned to Daslu and the question of what would be the best marketing campaign for Tranchesi, now that she was attempting to make an international shopping public aware of her brand by selling Daslu clothes overseas. "What does the rest of the world think about when they think about Brazil?" Guanaes said. "Sex, the body, beautiful people, and soccer. You should show the Brazilian soccer team in your clothes, and Brazilian models." No less than Lula, Daslu needed a revamped image—not one that stressed the exclusiveness of the store, the inaccessibility of the world of Daslu to all but the élite, but one that reached out to ordinary people. "You should tell people that you have the best jeans in the world," Guanaes said, and a servant came around with more tiny cups of espresso, while the scoops of ice cream in the bowl melted into each other, resolving into a thick, liquid blur of yellow and brown and pink. ♦

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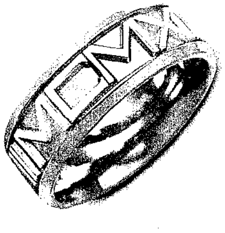

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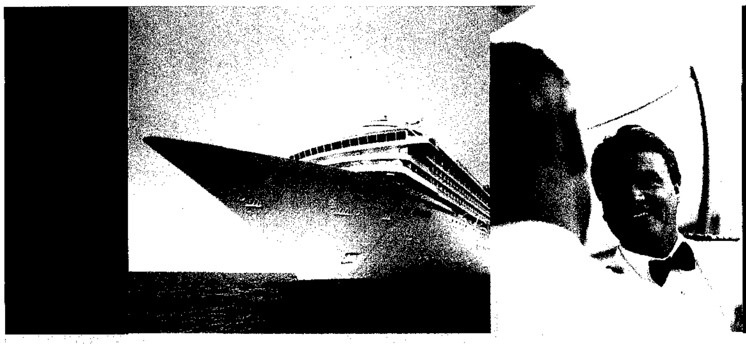

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SPECIAL REPORT

A TRAVELLER'S MARKET

BY PAUL BURNHAM FINNEY

While philosophers debate the elusive meaning of words like "worth" and "value," travellers have no trouble recognizing when their experiences are worthwhile. Encountering a pride of lions or the endangered black rhinoceros has significant value for visitors to South Africa. Likewise, combing the alleyways of The Forbidden City in Beijing, or strolling on The Great Wall, has clear worth for travellers to China.

These days, just being able to get away from the pressures of coping has undeniable value, and the word "escapism" has taken on new meaning. "We used to think a vacation was a luxury—a kind of frivolity," says Adam Leavitt, a Crystal Cruises senior vice president. "With everything so compacted in our lives—E-mails, cells, et cetera—it's now a necessity." For many, de-stressing has become the final bulwark of health and sanity, and fortunately the present traveller's market is rich with affordable options. For value added, here are some travel scenarios for discovering a world of pleasure and personal enrichment.

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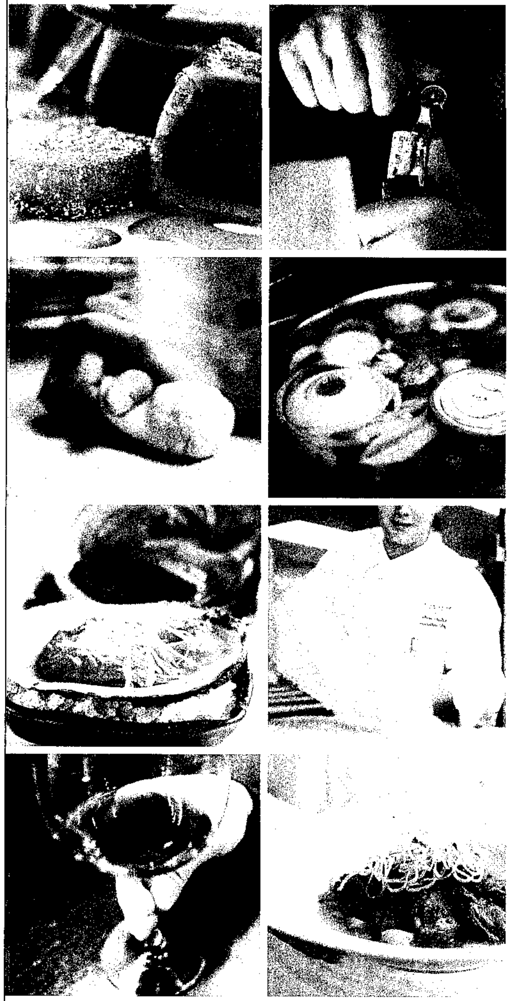

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PRINCELY PLAYGROUND

Dips in the Mediterranean are as enticing as throws of the dice at a glittery casino in **Monaco** (www.visitmonaco.com), the fairy-tale principality nestled between the French and Italian Rivieras and presided over by Prince Rainier. Although legendary as a preferred playground for the international jet set, Monaco can be surprisingly affordable—thus freeing up extra cash for a casino call. Other attractions that draw large crowds include the Monte Carlo International Tennis Open (April 12–20), the Spring Arts Festival (April 25–May 4), and the Grand Prix Formula One race (June 1st). If you're planning a season ahead, the entertaining Red Cross Ball swings into action on August 8th and the Monte Carlo Philharmonic presents outdoor concerts throughout August in the courtyard of the prince's palace. Hobnobbing with celebrities is, of course, permitted at all times in Monaco.

Champagne and a basket of fruit herald your three-night stay at the Monte Carlo Beach Hotel. Its package for two ($720) includes complimentary access to the nearby Monte-Carlo Resort which accommodates guests with tennis, golf, and pampering at the spa. Panoramic views await from the resort's rooftop corniche. Or, indulge in a two-night package ($795) at the Monte-Carlo Grand Hotel, located next to the famous hairpin turn of the Grand Prix. The modern architectural landmark offers an open-air dining terrace, rooftop pool, and casino.

STATELY STYLE

There's nothing quite like the sensation of being out to sea and riding the waves, and no one has presented the cruise experience more impeccably than **Crystal Cruises** (www.crystalcruises.com) aboard its globe-girdling ships, the Crystal Harmony and the Crystal Symphony. Winning repeated encomiums as the "best large cruise line" in polls of cruise patrons, Crystal Cruises has kept abreast of the evolving needs of its clients by providing top lecturers, fashionable spa treatments, inventive cuisine, and peerless itineraries. In a timely promotion, the cruise line is now offering up to $1,000 in savings (per stateroom) on a third of its 2003 voyages.

SPECIAL REPORT
A
TRAVELLER'S
MARKET

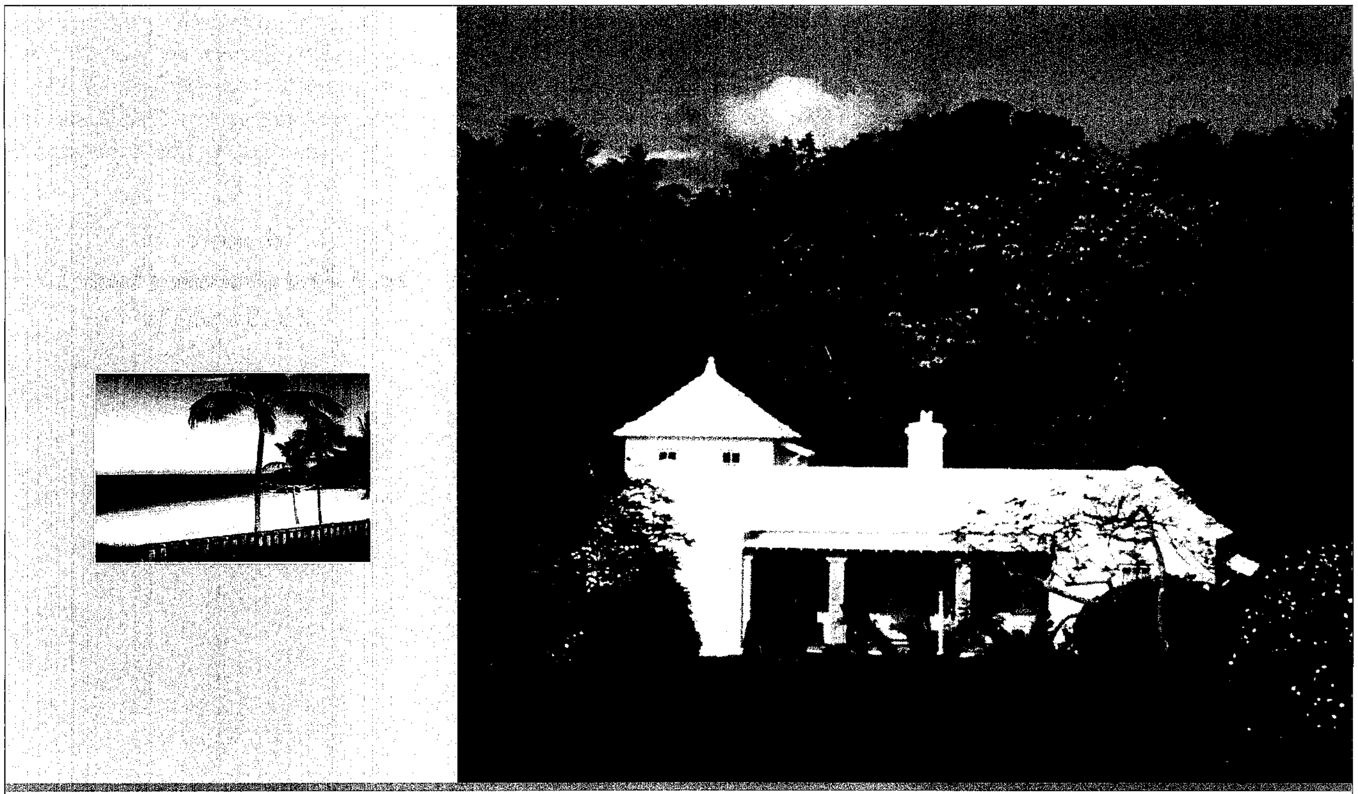
MONACO PRIMER

As a prelude to your trip to Monaco, join in a glorious spring fête called **Monaco Takes New York** (April 28–May 3; www.MonacoTakesNewYork.com), which will showcase the romance and splendor of the regal enclave in Gotham. At the opening-night gala in the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo will perform Prokofiev's "Cinderella," followed by dinner and a charity auction to benefit the dance troupe and BAM. Epicures will be treated to an extravagant lunch at Le Cirque 2000 (Monday to Friday) prepared by Chef Sylvain Etievant of the Hotel de Paris, and a raffle for a free trip to Monaco will enliven the festivities. In its nineteenth-century courtyard, the New York Palace Hotel will display some of the hottest and most historic race cars from Monaco's Grand Prix.

The best is yet to come with the début of the 68,000-ton Crystal Serenity (www.crystal-serenity.com) on July 7th. Dame Julie Andrews will do the honors at the champagne christening. Crystal's president Gregg Michel says, "In designing the Serenity, we've blended state-of-the-art shipbuilding with the desires of our guests." Most of the suites and staterooms include verandahs and are wired for twenty-hour-hour access to the Internet and E-mail. The Serenity features a hundred penthouses—fifty-six per cent more than the Crystal Symphony—including four spacious, pacesetting "apartments." Famed Chef Nobuyuki Matsuhisa is creating the menu for the Serenity's Silk Road restaurant. The first world cruise aboard the Serenity will depart Los Angeles in January 2004 and complete its peregrinations more than three months later in New York City after visiting thirty-four ports of call.

KILTS AND CASTLES

The "Scottish Dream" tour vetted by VisitScotland, the official tourism board of **Scotland** (www.toscotland.com), is a comprehensive survey of the country's varied attractions. The nine-day itinerary includes spins around the Victorian city of Glasgow and the Georgian precincts of Edinburgh, as well as visits to an assortment of classic castles (Crathes, Duart, Edinburgh, Glamis, St. Andrews, Stirling) and prominent sights (Loch Ness, Inverness, the Spey Valley, and the Isle of Mull in the Inner Hebrides). Mindful of Scottish austerity, the tour is priced at a thrifty $1,583, which covers airfare on British Airways (out of New York, Newark, Boston, or Philadelphia), four-star hotels, admission fees, and most meals (including daily Scottish breakfasts and a banquet with bagpipes). Even some of the drinks are on the house, such as fabulous malt Scotch at a distillery you'll visit. (The land tour alone can be booked for $1,029.)



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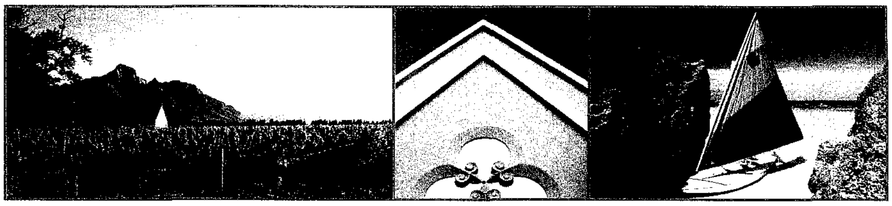
SPECIAL REPORT
A TRAVELLER'S MARKET

ANIMAL KINGDOM

South Africa affords valuable treasures beyond its gold and diamond legacy. The diverse terrain of South Africa (www.southafrica.net)—twice the size of Texas—comprises mountains, deserts, seashores, and jungles, and its wildlife (dominated by rhino, elephants, leopards, lions, and buffalo) is unsurpassed. The country's temperate climate nurtures many thriving vineyards that have produced an array of award-winning wines like Hamilton Russell Pinot Noir, Meerlust Merlot, and Vergelegen Chardonnay Reserve. South Africa also boasts some of the world's most acclaimed golf courses, including the Links Course at Fancourt Hotel and Country Club Estate, which will host this year's President's Cup (November 18–23). Both Johannesburg and Cape Town are reached from New York or Atlanta via the highly rated **South African Airways** (www.flysaa.com).

In a creative campaign to help get you there, the South Africa Tourism Board is offering two-week luxury tours, each under $3,000, which include airfare, four-star hotels, travel to three of the country's nine provinces, and safaris. In a typical itinerary guests will shop stylish Rosebank, Johannesburg's affluent suburb; visit Soweto, the historic heart of resistance to apartheid; tour the flower-bedecked capital of Pretoria; and overnight at one of the four luxury hotels in the renowned resort of Sun City. The Buffalo Tented Camp in Mpumalanga, near Kruger National Park, will be home base for four days. Here early risers will track animals and end the day with sundowners, while game is grilled on an open fire. The tour ends in Cape Town, dominated by "lofty Table Mountain with its beautiful tablecloth of fleecy clouds," as Scottish explorer David Livingstone described it in 1841. The port city is a spring-



WIN SEVEN DAYS IN PARADISE

For a chance to win an all-inclusive trip for two to the St. James's Club, an Elite Island Resort on the southeastern coast of Antigua (value $4,700), visit www.NewYorkerSmartTravel.com to enter the GREAT GETAWAYS SWEEPSTAKES.

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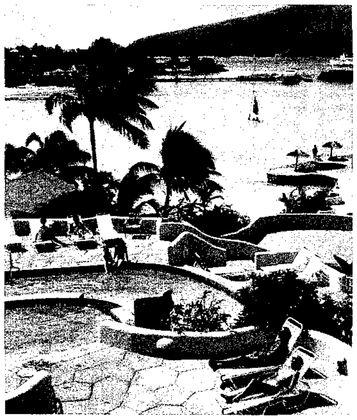
(Prize includes round-trip airfare.)



NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. All entries must be received by July 1, 2003. Contestants must be 18 years of age or older, legal U.S. residents, as of the date of entry. Winner selected at random. Void outside the U.S., in Puerto Rico, and where prohibited. For complete rules and regulations, visit www.NewYorkerSmartTravel.com.

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board for day trips to the rolling hills of the Winelands, where a feast in elegantly rustic Dutch restaurants will round out the itinerary. Chances are you'll be toasting the remarkable South Africa you've been privileged to experience.

BERMUDA SHORTS

On the angular Atlantic island of Bermuda—a mere hour and a half by air from New York City—you'll find tea and crumpets if you like, but also local treats like spicy shark hash in a spring roll at the Seahorse Grill in the Mandarin Oriental's **Elbow Beach** resort (www.mandarinoriental.com/bermuda). The favorite drink at the property's live-band Veranda Bar? "Dark 'n Stormy," says the hotel's Simone Gibbons. "It's Gosling's Black Seal rum with ginger beer. I like mine with a twist of lemon."

Elbow Beach, which harbors a half-mile stretch of pristine sand, is situated on Bermuda's south shore in Paget, some seven minutes from the action-central port of Hamilton. The fifty-acre spread dates back nearly a century, and it preserves the charm of Old Bermuda in its 244 guest rooms and suites. A Bermuda Breeze package invites you to luxuriate in a superior or deluxe double room during the high season (April and October) for three nights ($663) or for five nights ($1,080). The deal includes airport transfers, a buffet breakfast, and daily afternoon tea. In Bermuda, Fahrenheit temperatures range in the seventies from April to early June, and soar into the sunny eighties thereafter. Elbow Beach has attractively priced dive, tennis, and family packages, as well as an elaborate honeymoon package that commences with champagne on arrival and a four-course candlelight dinner, continues with a taxi tour of the island and a deluxe picnic, and is consummated by massages for two.

HUNGARIAN RHAPSODY

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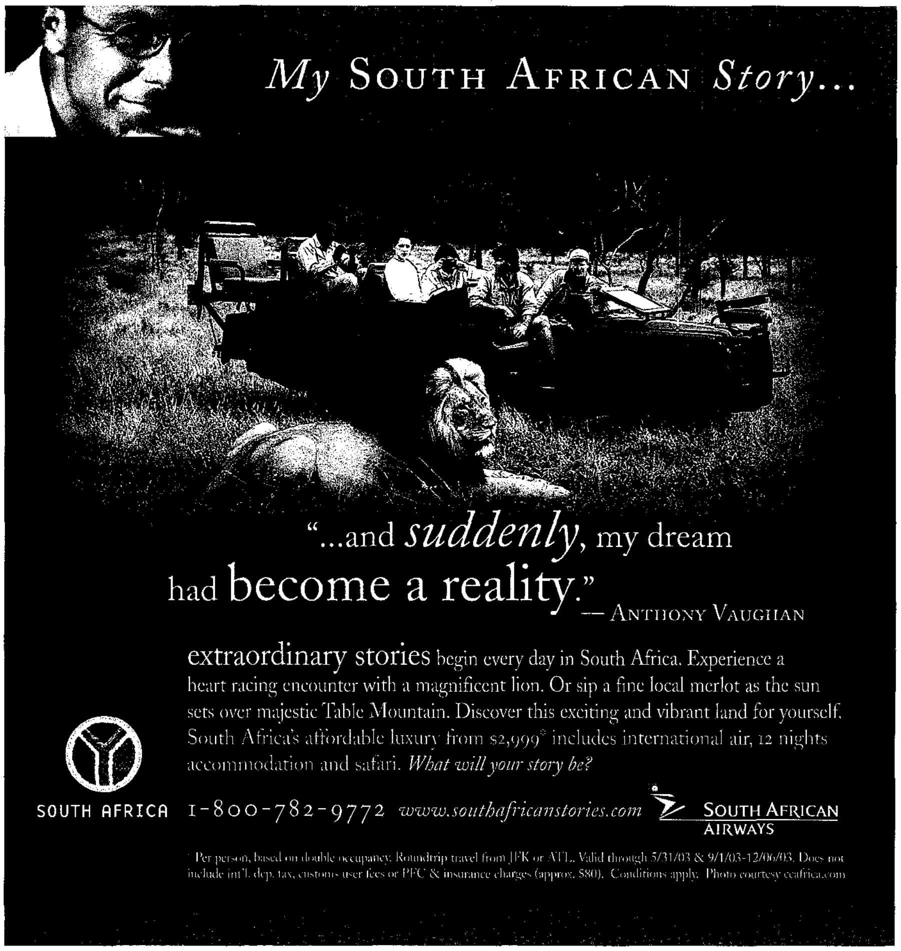

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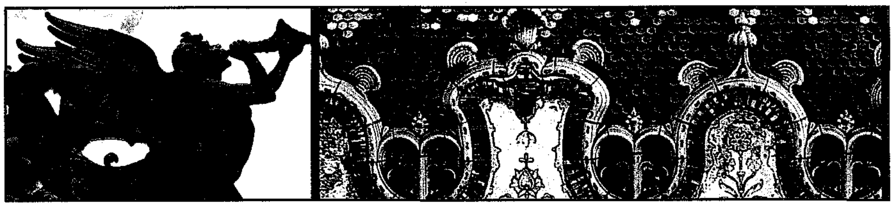
found throughout the city. One sanctuary is ten minutes from downtown on **Hungary's** Margaret Island, which was a royal game reserve a thousand years ago. Perhaps the residents' predilection for easing stress with healing waters was inspired by the mighty Danube, which transverses the metropolis. Outside Budapest, Hungary beckons with its wonders. A six-day "Scenic Hungary" tour ($959; includes hotels and dinners) is recommended by the Hungary National Tourist Authority (www.gotohungary.com). It showcases the wine country around Edger, the summer retreat of the Hapsburgs at Godollo, the renowned Matyo embroidery work at Mezokovesd, the "red gold"(paprika) at Kalocsa, the romantic city of Pecs with its art museums and mosques, and the baroque palace of the noble Festetich family near spectacular Lake Balaton.



HAPSBURGIAN GATEWAY

With opera, music, dance, and drama available year-round in its cities and towns, Austria can rightly claim to be a cultural superpower. The Austrian Alps, the Danube, and its famed Hapsburgian palaces add to the country's charms.

SPECIAL REPORT
A
TRAVELLER'S
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A comer among international carriers, **Austrian Airlines** (www.austrianair.com) operates wide-body Airbus flights daily from New York and Washington to Vienna. Blending modern sophistication with Old World charm, the airline offers first-class service at business-class prices with a six-course meal and sommelier-trained flight attendants. Even passengers in economy fly in style with a choice of meals served on china.

For Mozart devotees who want to attend the Salzburg Sommer Festspiele (July 26–August 31), Austrian Airlines offers a three-day, two-night package to Salzburg ($1,199) that includes coveted concert tickets. Additional nights and performances are available through the airline's vacation center.

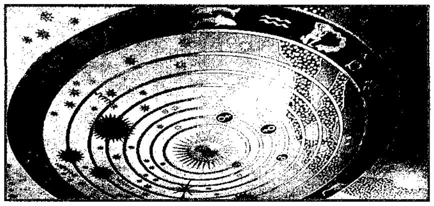
ON THE TOWN

The **Peninsula New York** (800-262-9467), with its strategic location at Fifth Avenue and Fifty-fifth Street, deserves a high five for high style. Nearby to the north are Bergdorf's, Prada, and Tiffany's, and just south are Cartier, Brooks Brothers, and Saks. The famed "Museum Mile" along Fifth Avenue is within easy strolling distance. The "Peninsula Experience" offers a Grand Luxe room at a substantial savings ($530 per night, discounted from $740), with continental breakfast for two and access to the Peninsula Spa's tri-level fitness facilities. Views of Manhattan can be seen from the spa's rooftop pool. (The offer is good through March 31st and again between June 23rd and September 1st.) Other perks—such as a free pressing of up to two garments per person and complimentary local phone calls—help to make your stay at the hotel a truly pampering experience.

To enter the GREAT GETAWAYS SWEEPSTAKES and for more information on any advertiser participating in this supplement, visit www.NewYorkerSmartTravel.com.

INSIDE INFORMATION

Phoenix House recently opened near Sloane Street in London's designer district. Its thirty-three luxury-apartment units are perfect for stakeouts during fashion week in September (minimum stay: seven days). . . . **Tania Vartan Academy** offers aspiring interior decorators a survey of trompe l'oeil with hands-on instruction in Italy: Sienna (July 27–August 17) and Florence (September 15–November 28). . . . The jewel of the **Hapuna Beach Prince Hotel**, on Hawaii's Kohala Coast, is its Hapuna Suite. Marble floors, teak windows, opulent brocade upholstery, and an executive chef come with the package. . . . The Turkish Treasures excursion (August 28–September 14) offered by **Far Horizons** will emphasize archaeological, cultural, and historical aspects of Turkey as well as provide gala dinners in celebrated restaurants and lodging at unique hotels like an Art Deco inn perched on a cliff overlooking the Aegean. . . . On Kauai, **Poipu Kapili** unveils Pampered Wahine, a deluxe package of in-room spa treatments for the stylish woman traveller. . . . Many of **Great Walking Holidays** tours in the Cotswolds include overnights at the Royalist Hotel, the oldest inn in England. Its 947 A.D. menu offers seasonal specialties such as roasted scallops with puréed apple or venison with pear and juniper-berry tatin. . . . The four-diamond, four-star **Jenny Lake Lodge** in the Grand Teton National Park opens for the season on May 31st. The elegantly rustic cabins are fashioned with Western-style furniture. . . . **Natural Habitat Adventures** introduces Arctic safaris in October, with polar bear viewing from the cushy, mobile White Bear Tundra Lodge, a bear magnet on wheels. . . . **Cross-Culture's** Scandinavia tours include overnight cruises in floating luxury ferries (Finland and Sweden, July 11–19; Denmark and Norway, July 18–27). . . . The Mediterranean-style Gulf Stream Hotel in Lake Worth, Florida (near Palm Beach) offers serene haven for **Stop Smoking Programs'** four-day intensives, with nicotine-addiction specialist David C. Jones.



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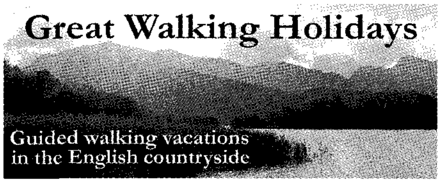

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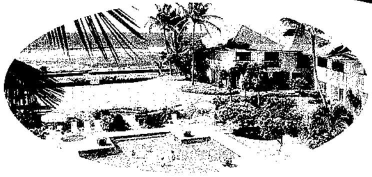

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Why models don't go down the runway until Suzy Menkes arrives.

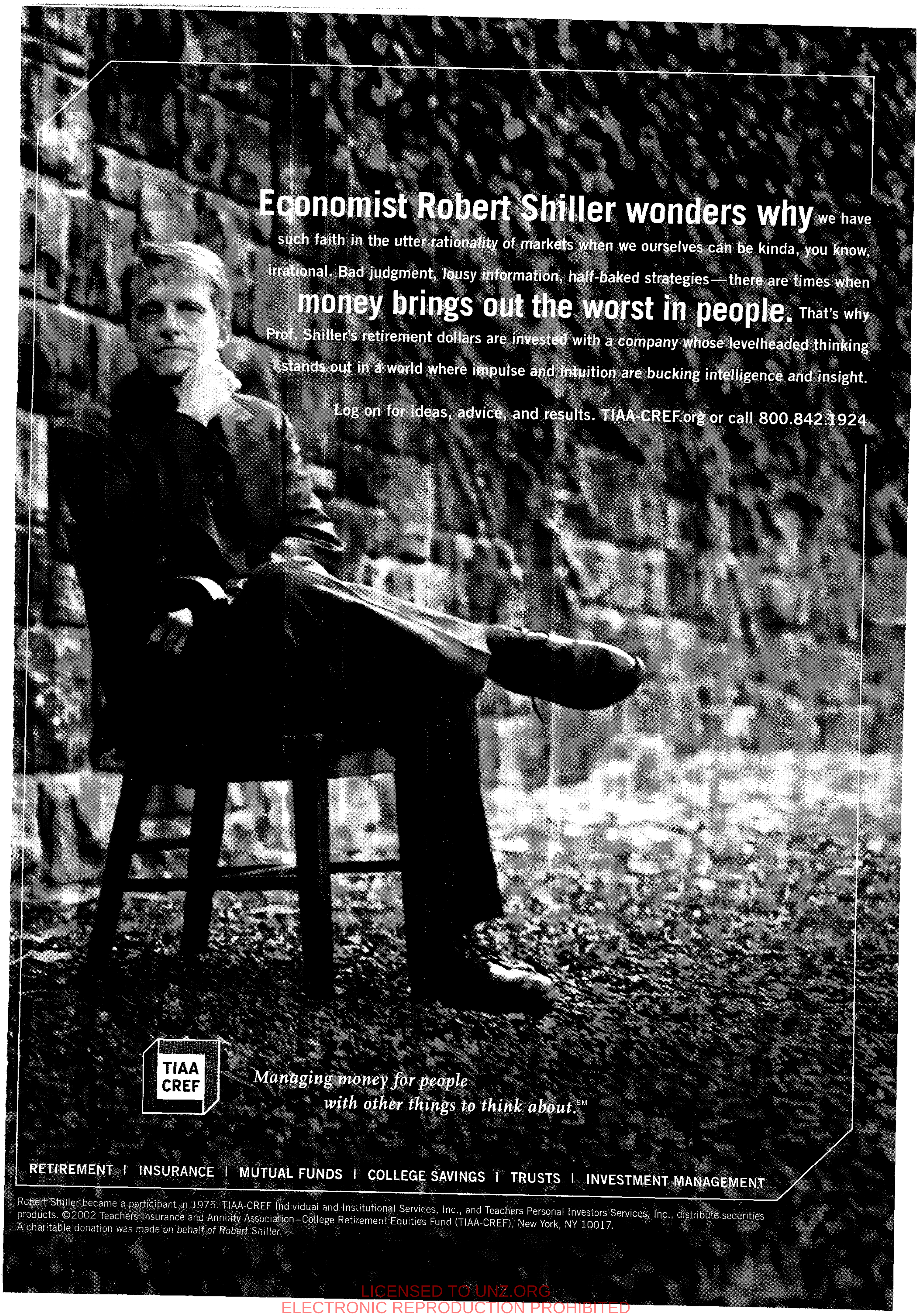
BY JOHN SEABROOK

It was just before noon on a chilly January day in Paris when Suzy Menkes, the *International Herald Tribune's* influential fashion editor, bustled into the newspaper's headquarters, in the suburb of Neuilly-sur-Seine. The evening before, Menkes had filed the last of three stories on the weeklong spring/summer couture shows—stories composed in virtuoso displays of deadline brinkmanship, begun on her laptop in a front-row seat beside the catwalk, finished in the back of a cab, as she and a photographer crept through the Paris traffic, and then transmitted from the cab to the *Tribune* using a wireless modem, in time to appear on the streets of Tokyo and Hong Kong four hours later.

Menkes at a Ralph Lauren show, February, 2003. Photograph by Arthur Elgort.

Menkes, who is fifty-nine years old, and who recently became a grandmother, was dressed in a navy-blue Issey Miyake Pleats Please pants suit, with a gray-blue pin-striped Mandarin-style silk jacket lined in pink, and black jodhpur boots. She looked a bit like an Asian empress on a shooting holiday in the English countryside. Her personal style, which features pillowy vintage jackets and scarves and a preference for soft, luxurious fabrics like velvet and silk, is nearly the opposite of the sleek, clothes-as-combat approach to dressing favored by the other fashionistas you see at the shows. Her most distinctive feature is her hair, which she wears with an odd-looking flip in front: a long demi-pompadour that is coiled back on the top of her head, creating a dinner-roll-size opening that you can see through from the side—a style that, combined with fearless reporting, has inspired people to call her Samurai Suzy.

The elevator rose to two, where the *Tribune's* editorial offices, in an undistinguished modern building, take up the entire floor—news on one side, features on the other. The features wing had beat-up-looking furniture and a stale smell of cigar smoke. I had imagined something more glamorous, having seen Jean Seberg, wearing a T-shirt with the *Trib's* yellow-and-black logo on it, selling copies of the paper in Jean-Luc Godard's film "Breathless." Menkes's desk was strewn with the gilded invitations that fashion houses send out for the shows. These were to the upcoming men's collections in Paris, which followed the couture shows, and would be followed by the Women's Ready to Wear Collections, beginning in New York, then moving on to London, Milan, and finally Paris. (New York used to come last, but some American-based designers wanted the order changed.) On the wall behind her desk were rows of file boxes with designers' names on them, in alphabetical order, and there were stacks of magazines everywhere, as well as a case of champagne, unopened, and shopping bags with gifts from fashion houses, waiting to be returned. Menkes doesn't accept freebies, and, unlike most members of the fashion press, does not routinely wear the clothes of the designers



Economist Robert Shiller wonders why we have such faith in the utter rationality of markets when we ourselves can be kinda, you know, irrational. Bad judgment, lousy information, half-baked strategies—there are times when **money brings out the worst in people.** That's why Prof. Shiller's retirement dollars are invested with a company whose levelheaded thinking stands out in a world where impulse and intuition are bucking intelligence and insight.

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she writes about. (She can't afford them.) When fashion houses send free items, she gives them to the American Hospital of Paris or returns them with a note saying, "I was brought up to believe a girl should never accept anything but flowers and chocolates."

As Menkes sat down at her desk, she made a weary *oufff* sound and began to regale her assistant, Jessica Michault, with the saga of last night's "nightmare" involving her wireless modem, which had failed to work in the cab and had occasioned a "frantic dash" back to Menkes's apartment, on the Rue Jean-Goujon, to use the landline. Menkes has a musical voice with a Wagnerian range of pitch. She speaks in perfectly formed sentences, as though dictating copy over the telephone, and her precise diction and British accent give a note of propriety to her utterances. Although frequently overwrought by the struggle to make the dilatory and capricious world of fashion comply with her relentless and unyielding deadlines, she rarely uses strong language, preferring expressions like "Oh, bother!" and "What a muddle!" and "Today went pear-shaped!"

"I literally thought I might lose my mind," Menkes was saying now, of her technical problems following the show. She seemed pleased by the prospect. She shot a reproachful look at her laptop, a cheap machine that she had bought, she said, "in one of my misbegotten and idiotic attempts to save the *Trib* some money." She added, "The truth is I just don't think the thing is up to the word count I produce."

Last year, Menkes produced about two hundred and ninety thousand words for the paper. She is only the *Tribune's* third fashion editor in forty years, and, carrying on the tradition of her predecessors, Eugenia Sheppard and Hebe Dorsey, she offers *Trib* readers verbal snapshots from the world of fashion, written in a staccato and tough-talking journalese—she's a Fleet Street Diana Vreeland. There are vivid descriptions of the clothes ("a masculine pants suit in a carapace of whiskey brown pearl buttons") and piquant judgments of their effect ("If you want a pick-me-up fashion cocktail of color in a tutti-frutti print, gaudy suede Puss-in-Boots and look-at-me accessories, this show was caricatural Versace"), and the occasional devastating put-down (as when Menkes wrote, of last spring's Jil Sander show, that the below-the-knee dresses "looked like something a woman who had lost her waist would choose from a mail-order catalogue"). Her byline is closely read both by fashion insiders—Domenico De Sole, the president of the Gucci Group, says that during the collections the workday always begins with "Did you see Suzy?"—and by the general public. Menkes gives you not just the clothes but the pounding music, the celebrities and society ladies in the front row, the breasts swaying on the runway, and the gleaming bare torso of John Galliano, the Dior designer, as, "dressed for the trapeze," he wriggles and prances down the catwalk at the end of his show.

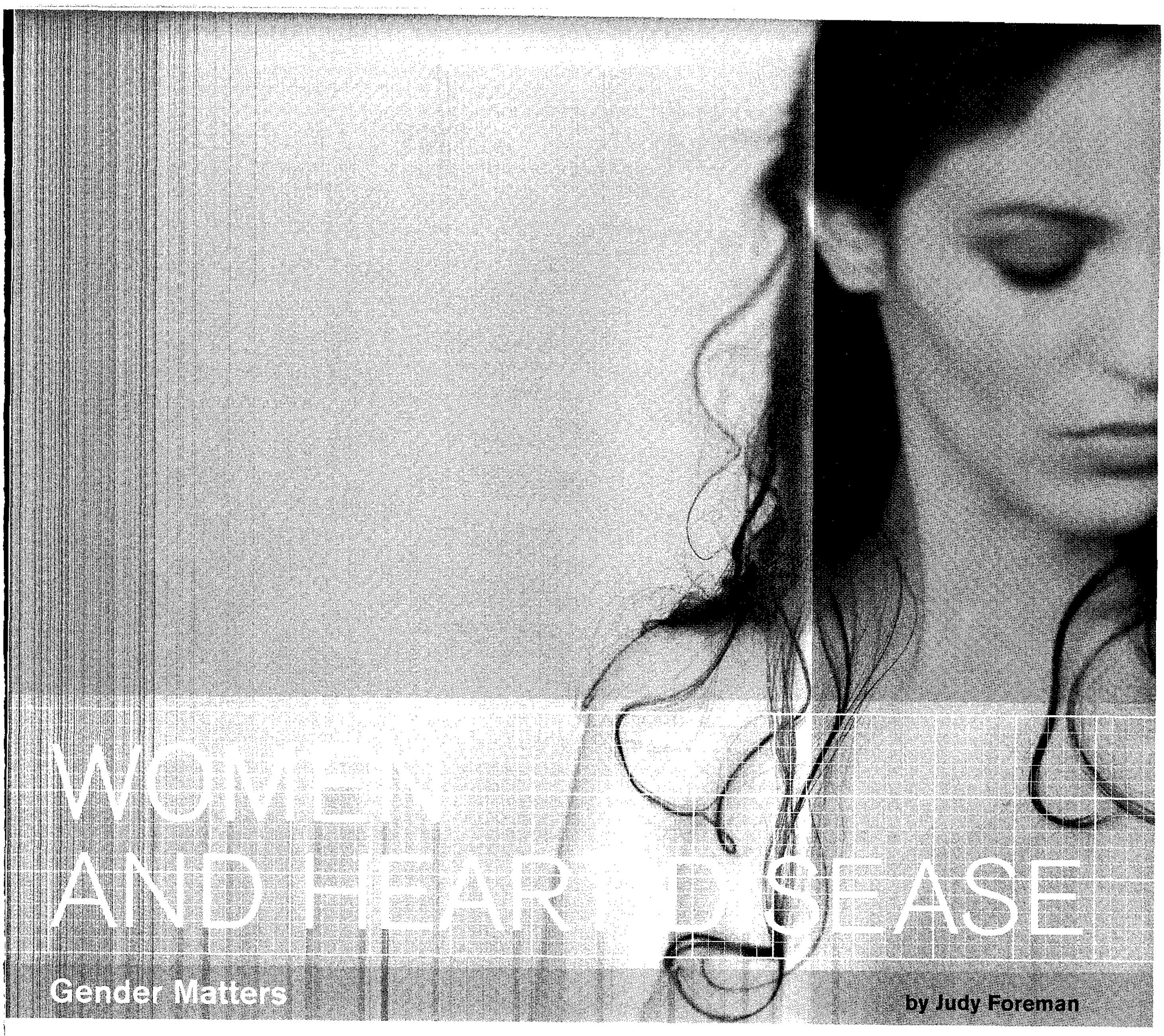
Menkes appreciates the humor in a prim and bookish-seeming British woman, whose personal tastes run to a quiet evening at the ballet or the opera, continually finding herself in the midst of "louche" (a favorite word) backstage gatherings of celebrities, half-naked models, and assorted fashion zanies, and unable to resist the revelry. "Like a slightly mad auntie, she is," the model Kate Moss says of Menkes. "Some of these fashion people can be a bit, you know"—she turned her head to one side and looked down her nose—"funny. But Suzy's never like that. When you see her backstage, you can always just have a nice chat about shoes with her."

For some designers, Menkes functions as a proud but demanding mother—one who wants you to succeed, and takes it personally when you let her down. Alber Elbaz, the head designer for Lanvin, says, "When I am designing an invitation for a fashion show, I will write Suzy's name on the trial proof. If her name looks good on it, I know I can send it." The night after the show, he has trouble sleeping, waiting for her review, which he will read at 6 A.M. "When we designers do a good collection, Suzy is so happy for us, and when we do a bad one she seems almost to get angry." Several years ago, Menkes wrote that the classic Chanel bag was over, and Chanel took out a full-page ad in the *Trib* to rebut her. Oscar de la Renta said, "I have gotten as mad at what she has written as anyone, and while I sometimes feel that she is off in her judgments of my collections, and she hurts my feelings—very deeply—in the end I must concede that her knowledge is vast." He added, "She doesn't base her reviews on what she likes—a lot of critics can't divorce themselves from their own taste."

The *Herald Tribune* has three times as many editors as writers—the opposite of the usual proportion, reflecting the paper's longtime role as a digest of stories written by New York *Times* and Washington *Post* reporters. The best-known *Tribune* bylines tend to be those of the culture writers (in addition to Menkes, there is Souren Melikian, who writes about art and auctions, and Patricia Wells, who covers food). Perhaps this is because while Parisian politics and diplomacy are no longer so important to American political interests, Parisian culture still influences our culture, at least as far as clothes, art, and food are concerned.

The *Tribune*, which was founded in 1887, has been struggling financially in recent years (it lost about four million dollars last year) and has been trying to remake itself as a newspaper for a new kind of international reader. Twenty-four-hour global news and sports channels and the Internet have altered the notion of what an expatriate is—the American in Paris, reading the box scores before heading out for a day at the Louvre, seems a relic of the past, perhaps part of the old Europe that Donald Rumsfeld evoked when he criticized France and Germany for opposing United States policy on Iraq. The new American empire would be needing a new imperial newspaper, and, as recent developments at the *Tribune* suggest, that paper would see the world less from the point of view of Paris and more from the perspective of New York.

For thirty-five years, the *Tribune* was



WOMEN AND HEART DISEASE

Gender Matters

by Judy Foreman

Cindy DeMarco was not supposed to have a heart attack. A young army lawyer in Virginia, who defends the government in medical malpractice cases, she stood five foot three and a half inches in her bare feet and weighed 125 pounds, much of it muscle. Yet two years ago—two months after passing a physical with a perfect score—DeMarco woke up with intense pain in her chest and upper back.

"I didn't know what the heck was wrong," she says. She toughed it out for twelve hours, then went to the emergency room. As she waited there, a twenty-nine-year-old man who came in with chest pains was whisked off for an EKG, or electrocardiogram, to see if he was having a heart attack. He wasn't. But DeMarco was, though it took two more hours to figure that out. Finally, she demanded an EKG—and mentioned that she was a lawyer. The EKG showed a heart attack in progress.

Perception vs. Reality

Although many women's worst medical fear is breast cancer, more women die of heart disease than all forms of cancer combined. In fact, heart disease is the number one killer of women and actually kills more women than men.

While heart disease kills more than 40% of women (of the 1,225,773 women who died in 2000, 505,661 succumbed to heart disease), only 8% think it's their major health concern. "When I had a heart attack at age 48, I was clueless about women and heart disease," says Nancy Loving, a co-founder and executive director of WomenHeart, a National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease. This lack of awareness was underscored in a survey of women heart patients recently published in the medical journal, *Women's Health Issues*, which reported that 45% of the women said they felt their heart disease had "come out of the blue."

Doctors shocked her heart back into normal rhythm, which felt "like Mike Tyson had punched me from the inside."

Furthermore, many primary care

physicians have not been trained to look for heart disease in women and consequently may fail to warn them of the dangers. "Many women only see their gynecologists for medical care into their mid-fifties and neglect their heart health," says Loving. "As a result, we don't get to see a cardiologist until we're half dead."

Delays in diagnosis can have deadly consequences for women. Even though women generally live longer than men, women heart patients simply do not fare as well as their male counterparts, especially following a heart attack. Consider these sobering statistics from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute:

- **38% of women (versus 25% of men) will die within one year of a recognized heart attack.**
- **35% of women (versus 18% of men) heart attack survivors will have another heart attack within six years.**
- **46% of women (versus 22% of men) heart attack survivors become disabled with heart failure within six years.**

One explanation for these gender disparities is that women do not receive life-saving cardiac medicines, medical technologies, and procedures nearly as often as men. According to the Centers for Disease Control, even though more women than men die of heart disease, women receive only 34% of angioplasties, bypass surgeries, and stents; 21% of implantable defibrillators; and 33% of open-heart surgeries.

A Masquerade of Symptoms

Delays in diagnosis and treatment can sometimes occur because women's heart attack symptoms can differ from those in men. The typical symptoms include crushing chest pain, shortness of breath, sweating, and pain radiating up to the left shoulder or down the left arm. Some women, however, only experience symptoms like stomach or jaw discomfort, upper back pressure, dizziness, fatigue, or nausea and vomiting.

"Many women have never been told these are their possible heart attack symptoms," says Dr. Sharonne Hayes, director of the Mayo Clinic's women's heart clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. "They're more familiar with the 'Hollywood heart attack,' where people clutch their chest, fall down, and die. Women expect dramatic symptoms and most of the time they are not." Another problem, according to Hayes, is that some primary care physicians and hospital emergency room staff are also not aware of these subtle symptoms and misdiagnose women's heart attacks as the flu, acid reflux, or anxiety. In some cases the doctor may think the woman is too young or too healthy to be having a heart attack.

Likewise, "women just don't come to the emergency room soon enough and often don't take their symptoms seriously," laments Dr. Alexandra Lansky, a cardiologist at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City. "Many women are so busy working and taking care of their families that they put their own health needs last."

Some women "worry what the neighbors might think if they called an ambulance but it turned out to be a false alarm," says Dr. Hayes. Others like Virgie Harris-Bovelle, 68, a clinical social worker, want to change clothes or finish work first. She recalls her heart attack twenty years ago. It was Father's Day, and she had already cooked dinner for her husband and kids and was working on a report. "I had horrible pain in my chest," she remembers. Her daughter urged her to go to the hospital. As her husband drove her to the ER, Harris-Bovelle kept working on her report. "When I saw it later, it wasn't even legible. I was in excruciating pain."

> **"Heart disease is the number one killer of women and actually kills more women than men."**

Upping the Ante

There is much that a woman can do to avoid becoming a heart disease statistic. This is especially true for younger women and what Lansky refers to as an age paradox. Surprisingly, there has been an increase of sudden death among women that is attributable to heart disease.

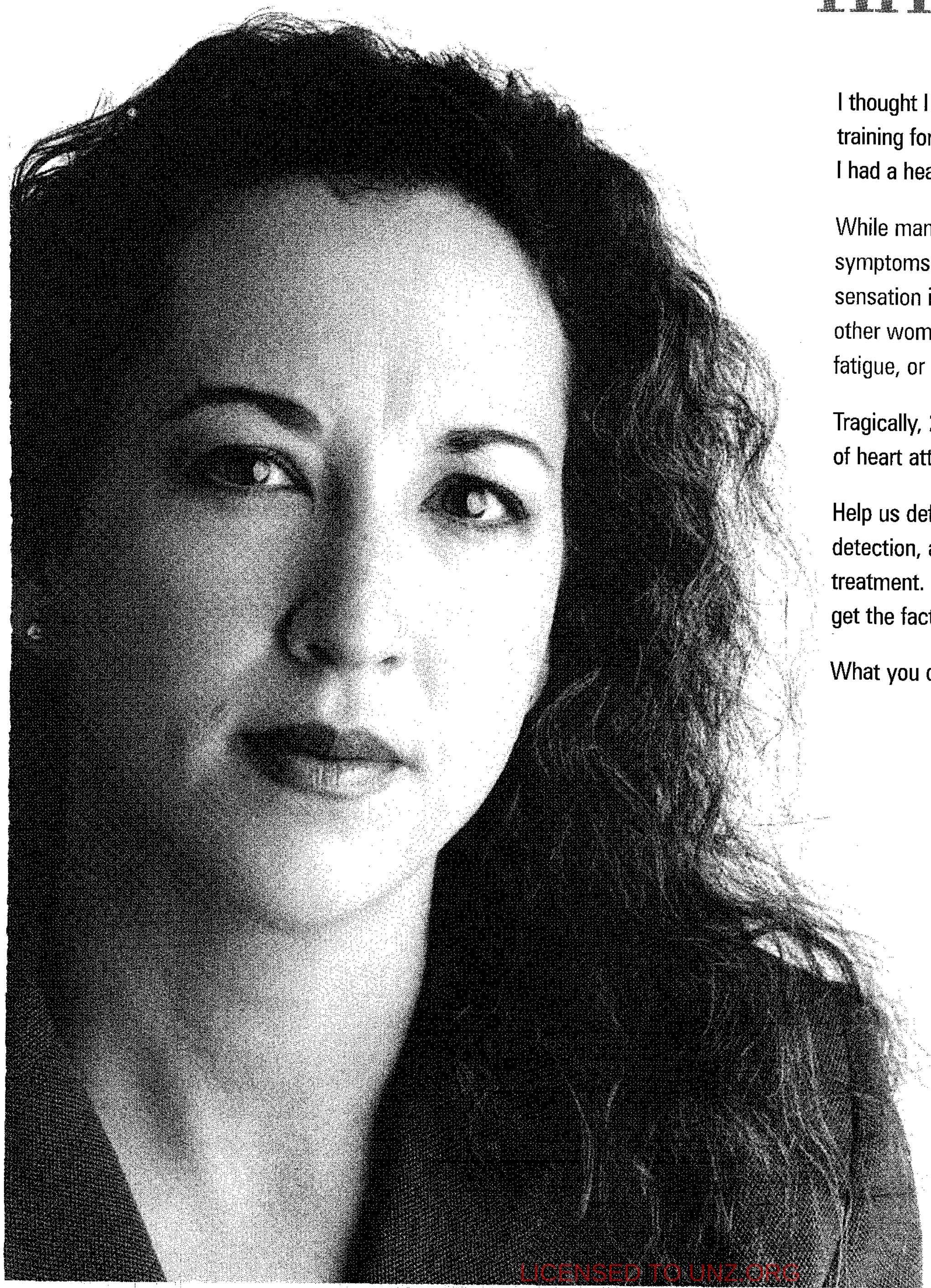
Any woman who smokes should quit, she says, but especially young women. According to Lansky, the risk of cardiovascular problems stemming from smoking appears to be greater in this group. Yet," says Lansky, "we don't know why."

Secondly, all women should know that diabetes (an underdiagnosed condition) and obesity, which tend to go hand in hand, increase heart disease risk in women. Diabetes is a "main driver of heart disease in younger women," Lansky says. In fact, diabetic women under age 55 with no other risk factors have a two to three times greater risk of dying from coronary heart disease than do women without diabetes.

Unfortunately some people only learn they have diabetes when chest pain sends them to the hospital for catheterization. (Catheterization involves threading a tube from the groin up into coronary arteries to see if arteries are blocked. If they are, doctors often perform a balloon angioplasty, where a balloon-tipped catheter is inserted to flatten the plaques.)

Recent data suggest that when women get catheterization under non-emergency conditions, they do just as well as men when given stents (little wire-mesh cylinders inserted to keep arteries open). But in the midst of a heart attack, women don't get catheterized as quickly as men do. In other words, it not only takes women longer to get to the ER, "it takes longer once there to get to the cath lab," says Lansky.

A heart attack was almost my finish line.



I thought I was a healthy 30 year old woman training for a marathon when, out of the blue, I had a heart attack.

While many women get the classic heart attack symptoms—chest and arm pain, a squeezing sensation in the chest, and shortness of breath—other women will get only dizziness, nausea, fatigue, or upper back pressure.

Tragically, 267,000 women die each year of heart attacks.

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Did You Know?

When it comes to accurately diagnosing heart disease, gender matters. Estrogen and progesterone can alter the electrical activity of the heart, which often leads to false positives in the standard treadmill stress electrocardiogram test. Because the EKG isn't a perfect diagnostic tool in detecting heart disease, women with risk factors might be better served by stress tests such as nuclear imaging and echocardiography, according to Dr. Jennifer Mieres, a cardiologist at North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset, New York.

Not only is nuclear imaging more accurate, it measures all of the indicators for heart disease of an EKG (how well a person exercises, heart rate, and blood pressure), while it also measures blood flow to the heart under stress. Echocardiography shows how well the heart can pump at rest and during exercise.

Women who cannot perform treadmill exercise tests due to older age, arthritis, or excess weight can take pharmacologic stress tests that use a drug to reproduce the effects of exercise on the heart. Other cardiac diagnostic tests include chest X-rays, ultra-fast CT's (or heart scans), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), and angiography.

To learn more, download WomenHeart's free brochure, *How Do I Know I Have Heart Disease? A Woman's Guide to Diagnosis and Testing*, by visiting www.womenheart.org.

The Aftershock

Penny Anthony, now 48, was a supervisor in a maximum security facility for mentally disordered offenders in Nevada, until one heart attack and another close call forced her to retire last year. She went back to work after her first heart attack and the insertion of a stent, but then was involved in a "really bad takedown" in which she and other officers literally wrestled an inmate to the ground.

Afterwards, she had chest pains that prompted doctors to put a stent on a second artery.

She credits her recovery to a support group where she interacted with other women heart attack survivors that provided her with the emotional validation she needed. During cardiac rehab, "the men wore heart disease like a badge of courage, but I huddled in shame," recalls Anthony, who adds that "for months after my heart attack, I didn't really realize that depression is normal." Sadly, it is. Women who have heart attacks often have unrecognized depression, and in general, a person who is depressed after a heart attack has a poorer prognosis.

> **"My body had been talking to me for years, but I kept pushing it beyond its endurance."**

Anthony's turning point came when she went to WomenHeart's Science and Leadership Symposium at the Mayo Clinic last fall and encountered sixty other women heart patients. "I met women in their sixties and seventies who were nonchalant about going to the cath lab, which inspired me to get over my own anxiety about it."

Washington social worker Harris-Bovelle did fine for many years after her first heart attack, but developed chest pains a few years ago. She was misdiagnosed and finally collapsed on an escalator. She chose a new team of doctors who detected an arrhythmia and inserted a defibrillator, a device that shocks the heart back into normal rhythm after it starts beating dangerously fast.

But a crucial wire on the defibrillator malfunctioned. It saved her life once, she says, but one day, when she was alone in the house, it went off unnecessarily. "I got shocked sixty times. It was horrible." She crawled to a phone and finally got to the hospital, where the problem was fixed. She is now feeling fine, but has some hard-earned advice for other women: "Pay attention to your bodies. My body had been talking to me for years, but I kept pushing and pushing beyond its endurance."

And the army lawyer, Cindy DeMarco? She learned that her heart attack two years ago was probably caused by a spasm in an artery, behind which a clot had developed. Luckily, there was not too much damage to her heart muscle. But a year ago, while running, she went into ventricular tachycardia, a dangerously abnormal heart rhythm. "I almost died again," she says.

In the emergency room, doctors shocked her heart back into normal rhythm, which felt, she says, "like Mike Tyson had punched me from the inside." Five days later, she had a catheter ablation, in which doctors inserted wires into the heart and used radio waves to kill the cells believed to be triggering the arrhythmia.

It worked, and DeMarco's back to running, and now, with her doctor's approval, rock climbing and scuba diving as well. She has also become a woman with a mission—to urge other women to educate themselves about heart disease and insist on the diagnostic tests and treatments they need.

"If I hadn't demanded the EKG," she says, "I'd either be dead or have serious heart damage." What gave her the courage to insist on getting what she needed was a simple bottom line: "It's my life."

Judy Foreman is a nationally syndicated health columnist. She is also a lecturer on medicine at Harvard Medical School and an affiliated scholar at the Women's Studies Research Center at Brandeis University.

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Myra was lucky to survive the heart attack no one was expecting.

While giving birth, Myra suffered a series of severe heart attacks. Now, with 5 Guidant stents, she is able to raise the children she holds so dear. But many women aren't as lucky.

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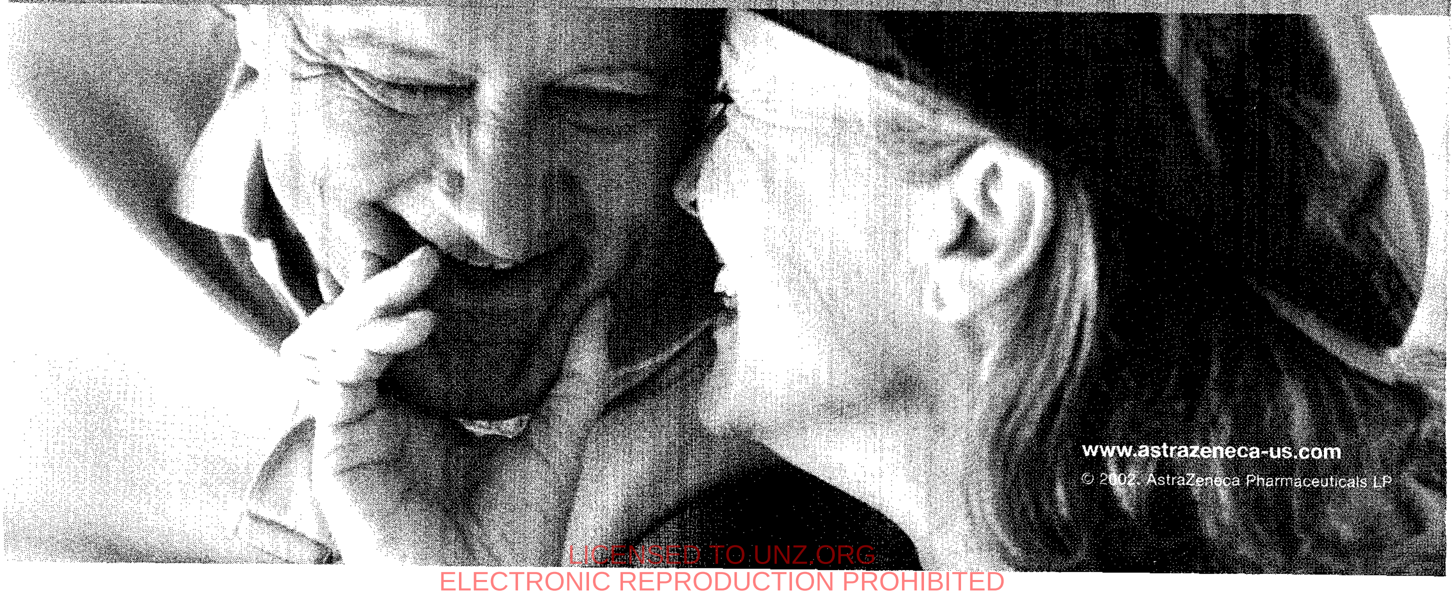

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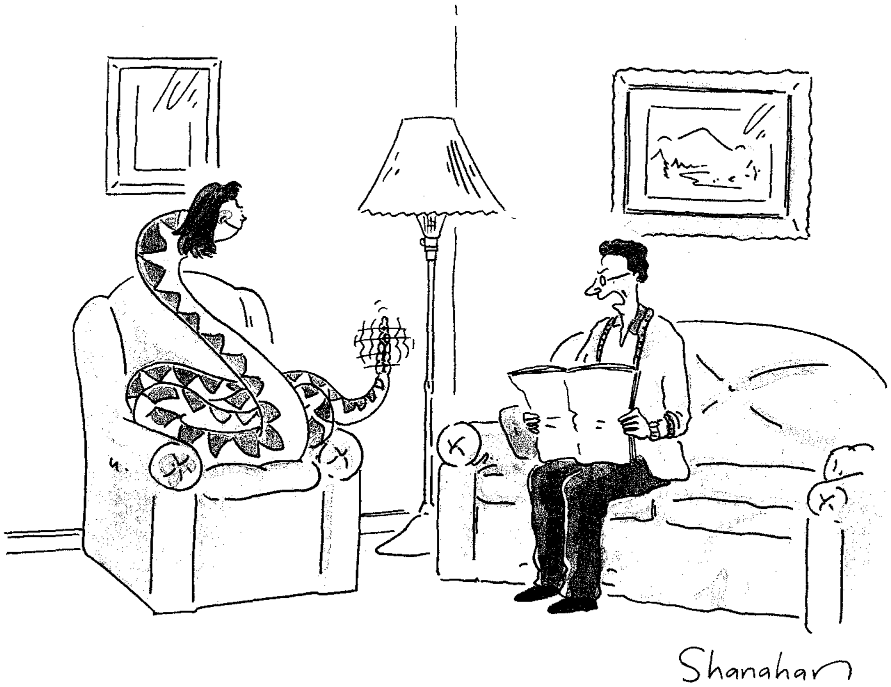
published as a partnership between the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post*. But, in October, 2002, the *Times* forced the *Post* to sell its stake in the paper, for sixty-five million dollars (according to the *Post*, the *Times* refused to invest in the paper, and threatened to start a rival publication unless the *Post* sold). On January 2nd, stories from the *Post* stopped appearing. The *Times* is currently making decisions about the content and production of the *Tribune*, and while "there are no plans at this time to change the name," Howell Raines, the *Times*' executive editor, told me, "that's not to say that down the road that couldn't happen."

When Raines visited the *Tribune's* offices, in December, he made a point of meeting with Menkes privately. "I wanted to tell her that she writes our kind of journalism," he said. As Menkes was studying the menswear calendar, I brought up the subject of the *Times* and her place in the new order. Earlier in the week, the office had been the site of a remarkable announcement by the *Tribune's* outgoing chairman, Peter Goldmark, who told the assembled staff that the *Times* takeover meant "the end of the *Tribune* as an independent newspaper, with its own voice and its own international outlook." Goldmark had added, "This is a great loss. . . . At a time when the world is growing to mistrust America, it needs thoughtful voices and independent perspectives that see the world whole and are not managed from America."

The *Times* already has four fashion writers, headed by Cathy Horyn, who cover the same collections that Menkes covers. I suggested to Menkes that she might split responsibility for the collections with the *Times* writers, but she said that "the whole thing about fashion is that it's global, and you can't really follow it unless you see everything." Nor was she interested in spending less time in Paris; she is forthright about her Francophilia. "Paris is the breeding ground of fashion at all levels," she said. "Whether it is Belgian designers out in the burbs putting on cool shows, bourgeois ladies putting on the chic for Chantilly races, or those couture seamstresses with their gossamer hand-stitching. It's the taxi-driver thing: the London cabbies care about sport; the New York cabs care how many blocks you are going; and the Parisian taxi-drivers care about how John Galliano is doing at Dior."



"And just what the hell is that supposed to mean?"

• •

On the other hand, she would be happy if the *Times* would rationalize the paper's confusing and inefficient international deadlines. For example, that morning the staff was preparing an edition for the suburbs of Tokyo, which would then be "replated" for the Tokyo city edition, three hours later, and replated again for the next European edition. "As a result of all this speed-of-light technology," Menkes said, "we all have to work harder than ever."

Menkes first fell in love with Paris as a teen-ager, when, during her "gap year" between leaving school and going to university, she studied dressmaking there. "It was a very stuffy couture place, which is where I learned about bias cuts and how to make patterns out of paper. Everything was very proper—I was 'Mademoiselle Menkes.' It was certainly not the louche Left Bank life I had imagined from reading Jean-Paul Sartre." In Paris, Menkes lived with a White Russian émigré family, whose matriarch took her to her first couture show, at Nina Ricci. "I just loved it," Menkes recalled. Later, when she returned to Paris as a university student, she would sneak into the ready-to-wear venues at five in the morning and hide under the stage for four hours, until the audience arrived and she could safely emerge and mingle with the crowd.

She already had a taste for luxury, which she believes she inherited from her father, a Belgian cavalry officer who was evacuated from Dunkirk in 1940. He met and married Menkes's mother during the war, and then was killed in 1943, several months before Suzy was born, when the plane he was flying for the R.A.F. disappeared off Malta. "My mother used to say that the only thing he brought with him on the boat from Dunkirk was a pair of silk socks," Menkes recalled. "And that's what I love, real luxury, the kind of luxury you can feel and smell—I will always spend the extra money to get a silk vest, not a cotton vest."

During the war, the Menkeses (Suzy has an older sister, Vivienne, who is a travel writer and a translator) moved from London to a village near Brighton, not far from the cliffs. "My mother lived on a widow's pension, so times were hard," Menkes said. But her mother always made an effort to dress well; one of Suzy's earliest memories is of her mother's moss-green car coat, which she wore with matching shoes.

Menkes was a good student and won a scholarship to Cambridge, where she read history and English literature. She signed up for *Varsity*, the university newspaper, and in her final year became its first woman editor-in-chief. She wrote a fashion and society column called "A Bird's Eye View," and one of her first scoops was reporting that Marianne Faithfull's boyfriend at the time, John Dunbar, had been busted for pot. It was the mid-sixties, swinging London was the center of the fashion world, and Menkes wore a miniskirt and white Courrèges boots that she had saved up for. ("Actually, they were knockoffs, but I didn't tell anyone.")

After university, she got a job as a junior fashion reporter for the *Times* of London, and it was there that she met her husband, David Spanier, then the paper's diplomatic correspondent, who later became a renowned author of books on chess and poker. They were married in 1969, and Menkes, whose father was Jewish, converted to Judaism, Spanier's religion. (Some fashion designers prefer not to show on Yom Kippur, which usually falls during the collections: everyone knows that Menkes doesn't attend fashion shows that day.) She became the fashion editor of the *Times* in 1978. "Milan was just coming up, and the nineteen-eighties belonged to Italy, with the rise of Armani, Versace, and Gigli, and I covered all that," she recalled. "And then the Japanese started to come to Paris, and then Lacroix came in with his froufrou, and Calvin Klein and Helmut Lang with minimalism, and Ralph Lauren, who sensed people wanted to be defined as much by their habitats as by their uniforms."

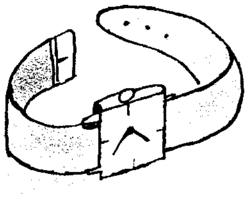
In 1988, the *Tribune* hired Menkes as Hebe Dorsey's successor. Menkes, who doesn't look the part of a grande dame—she's neither tall nor especially regal—needed to invent a persona to go along with her new status. Her solution was her hair style, which, as her friend Marion Hume put it, transformed her from a "North London middle-aged woman with a slightly bouffy bob into an icon."

As a fashion writer, Menkes says, she lives "for those moments when there is a sense that nothing after this show will ever be the same." She goes on, "Prada had a moment in the mid-nineties, which was the beginning of the ugly aesthetic—the end of sweet colors, and so forth. Rei Kawakubo, of Comme des Garçons, had a moment like that in the late nineties, with those punk-rock clothes, and Helmut had a moment when he did feathers under clear plastic, and another moment when he did his angel-wing collection. And then there was the Sean John collection, in 2000—a time when minimalism was big, and everyone was in navy and gray—and there was Lil' Kim in the front row in a multicolored fur coat."

Unlike some people in the fashion world, who seem to have no life outside it, Suzy and her husband raised a family of three boys, Gideon, Joshua, and Samson, who are now thirty, twenty-eight, and twenty-four. As we drove around between fashion events, she used her cell phone to keep up with family matters, including the activities of her oldest son's baby daughter, Jessica (Menkes recently had a handbag made with her granddaughter's picture silk-screened on it, "and I intend to show it off among the Guccis all over Milan"); her middle son's upcoming wedding, in California, in August; and her youngest son's efforts to begin a career in journalism. Sam was writing a trial piece for the *Financial Times* about Al-Jazeera's new English-language Web site, and Menkes was concerned about the lead. "It seems as though one should at least mention Iraq in the first paragraph," she said.

Since taking over at the *Tribune*, Menkes has covered every set of collections, attending some six hundred shows a year. She continued to work following the death of her husband, in April of 2000, which was, by all accounts, a terrible loss. When I brought it up, her voice got shaky. "He was sixty-seven, in perfect health, exercised, never smoked, and just dropped dead one day of a stroke," she said. She paused for a long time and then said with a laugh, "Maybe that's how I'll go—just pop off at a fashion show."

The men's collections were held in a wide variety of spaces around Paris—from the dilapidated music hall where the Belgian hot shot Raf Simons staged his defile, to the headquarters of UNESCO, where the Hermès men's collection was presented (and where not much else seemed to be going on). I plunged into the rush and bustle of securing the invitations and getting to the shows on time, but I soon learned that when you're in Menkes's company there's no rush, because, as they say in the fashion business, the show doesn't start until Suzy arrives.



The couture shows had summoned Menkes's rhapsodic, swooning style. Christian Lacroix's gowns were "rich with mille-feuille layers and sweet-toothed patterns from a tiny wallpaper print jacket to lacy hose," and there were Chanel's "wispy hems that, like so many of the couture special effects, just evaporated into an ethereal mist." At the Azzedine Alaïa couture show, she had even joined the flatterers backstage in a moment of fanship with the diminutive master, before switching back to her reporter persona and hurtling out the door to make her deadline. But the men's shows, coming after the high theatre and artistry of the couture shows, were dispiriting—"the tedium of good-looking guys parading quite nice stuff," as Menkes once wrote.

Couture preserves the old notion of fashion as an art, one led from above by a few fantastically gifted designers, in whose "febrile" (another favorite Suzy word) imaginations are born important conceptual changes that move fashion forward. These ideas then filter down to ready-to-wear, and down again to the mass market—a process, Menkes told me, that takes about seven years. That's how fashion used to work, but men's clothing is actually much more characteristic of the business today. Men's fashion is less about design and artistry and more about image and marketing. What's important in men's clothes is the blend of male archetypes that the company chooses to create—businessman, hippie, mod, rocker, gigolo, schoolboy. Making an image isn't like making an amazing dress; it's a collaborative process involving lots of people, on both the design and the marketing sides. It is not an accident that two of the most successful designers in the business, Giorgio Armani and Ralph Lauren, began in menswear.

Menkes has covered the rise of the image-makers, but I got the feeling, during our time together, that her heart was with the vanishing world of "artists" who create "high fashion." One day, I asked her how she felt about denim. She said, "My weakness is I can't quite bring myself to really care about jeans. I've tried

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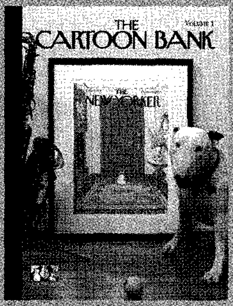

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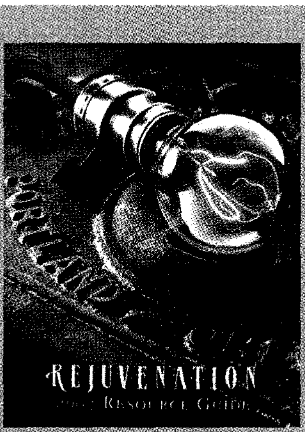

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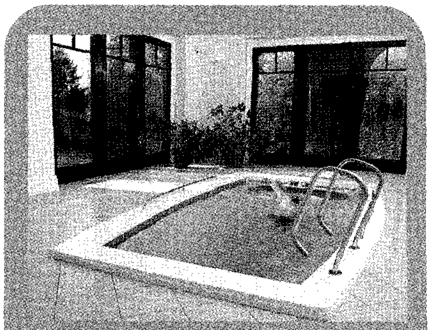

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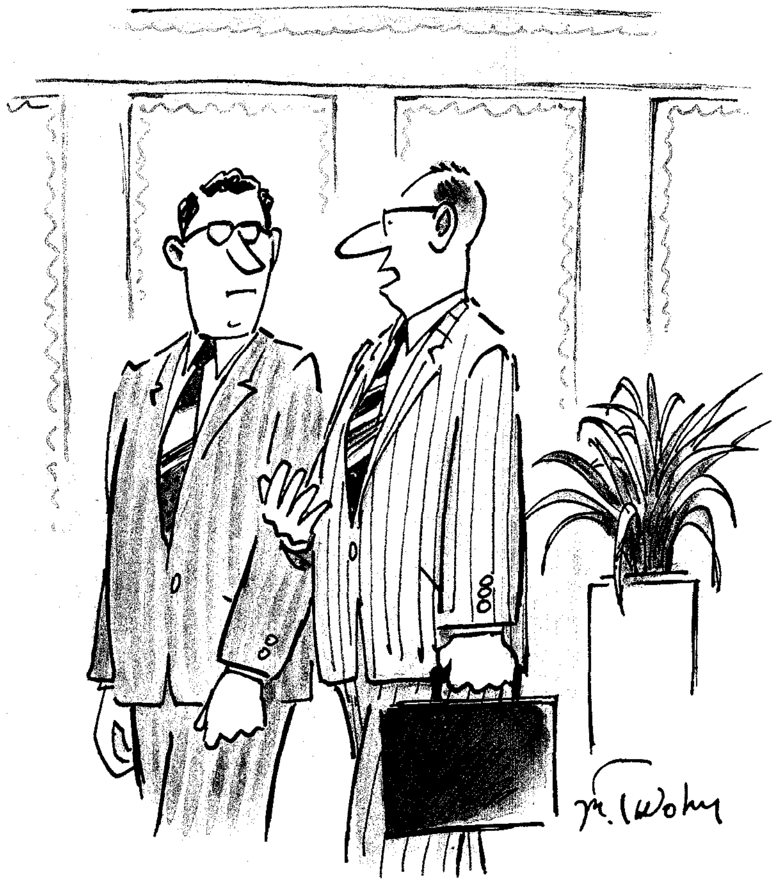
everything. Even when Dolce and Gabbana dress them up with all that embroidery and have Naomi's backside hanging out of them—to me, jeans are just jeans. There, I've admitted it. And, so long as I'm being absolutely honest, I don't really find sneakers so fascinating, either."

On another occasion, while she was sipping tea at the Hôtel Costes, a trendy spot on the Rue Saint-Honoré, I asked whether a woman who was almost sixty was too old to cover such a youth-oriented enterprise as fashion. Menkes replied, "But why should fashion be the province of youth? Certainly, it shouldn't be exclusively the province of older people—God forbid—as it was in the nineteen-fifties, when young girls were encouraged to dress like their mothers as soon as possible. But nowadays mothers think they must dress like their daughters, which is, in its way, just as silly."

One night, while we were having dinner at Davé, a Chinese restaurant that is a favorite of the fashionistas, I asked Menkes whether she thought the fashion industry still served to reinforce notions of class, or whether class had been replaced by a kind of tribalism based on brands. "Margaret Thatcher said there was no such thing as society," Menkes replied, "but, certainly, where I was brought up there was a society—and everyone knew what you could get away with and what you couldn't. You could go out and buy all the right clothes, and you'd still be sneered at, because you were aspiring to something beyond your place. This is what I find remarkable about Americans—they believe that if you buy the right clothes you will be accepted by the right people, regardless of where you come from. It's quite touching, really. I don't know if I believe that. But I suppose it's a good thing they think it, as it keeps the fashion business going."

We saw a few good shows, like the Dior presentation put on by Hedi Slimane, who Menkes feels is the "buzziest" young designer of the moment. Bernard Arnault, the chairman of LVMH (Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton), which owns Dior, embraced Menkes before the show, and the two chatted amicably. After Menkes's review of John Galliano's women's ready-to-wear collection for Dior in 2001, in which she wrote, "Isn't there enough aggression in the world without models snarling at the audience?," LVMH banned her from all its shows. (The ban had been lifted by the end of the week.) When I asked Suzy about Arnault's apparent change of heart, she reminded me that "this is fashion—people like to make dramas out of things."



"It wasn't until I discovered how much the upper one per cent were losing on dividends that I became a truly compassionate conservative."

Menkes praised Junya Watanabe's collection, where cowboy-hippie clothes offered an imaginative twist on Sergio Leone Westerns; Helmut Lang and Louis Vuitton also met with her approval. After a good show, Menkes would become almost giddy, but when a show was dull it would drag her spirits down. "Oh, I was *so* hoping for a lift from Saint Laurent," she croaked as, at ten on a Sunday evening, she fought her way through rain to Raf Simons and, clutching the railing on the slick marble stairs to take the pressure off her knees, descended into the clammy music hall. (Menkes broke her kneecap in a fall four years ago, and covered the collections in a wheelchair.) On hearing that the music was going to be loud, she rooted around in her bag for a pair of earplugs.

At breaks in the schedule of runway presentations, while other members of the fashion press knocked off for lunch or went shopping, we visited the showrooms of lesser-known designers, who were not established enough to show. Menkes pursued these designers (some of whom were just out of school) partly in the hope of discovering something new and partly out of a British sense of fair play. One criticism of Menkes as a fashion arbiter is that she is too Parisian in her outlook; she doesn't give young designers in New York the same consideration she devotes to those working in Paris. But Menkes says this is simply because working in Paris makes designers better: "Every young designer should come to Paris at some point in his career—Paris just sharpens you up."

Christoph Broich, a fledgling German designer, was so startled to see Menkes at the door that it took him some minutes to work up the courage to speak. In a showroom in the Marais district, Veronique Branquinho, a Belgian who was making menswear for the first time, explained the thinking behind her designs. Menkes liked her. "I admire people with modest aspirations like this," she said. "They seem to get the whole point of clothes, which is to make things that people just want to wear."

Occasionally, the pressure and consternation of covering so many shows seemed to overwhelm Menkes, and I'd see her sitting in the front row, her head in her hands, exhausted. On certain occasions, she has been known to slide to the floor in a faint. But, on leaving the venues and entering the streets of Paris, she always revived a little. "You'll never see anything more beautiful!" she exclaimed, as we came into the Place de la Concorde after the Comme des Garçons show, pointing out how the wet, cloudy weather brought out the different shades of slate and brown in the broad tree-lined boulevards.

New York's Fashion Week, which occurred this year during the frigid second week of February, when the city was under orange alert, was Menkes's first visit here since the *Times* assumed sole possession of her newspaper. She had lunch with an editor from the *Times* on Tuesday, and when I saw her afterward she said, "Do you know, they have forty-one staff salaried culture writers? It's staggering, really." She did not think that the fate of the *Tribune* had been decided, but hoped that the people at the *Times* "would let me know when they do make up their minds."

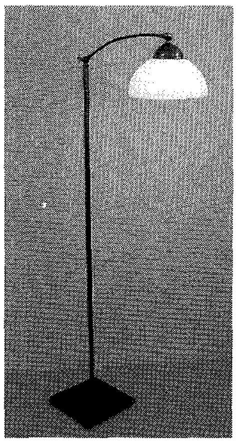
In New York, Menkes would review shows from nine in the morning until ten at night, have dinner with colleagues and friends, get back to the Wyndham Hotel at around midnight, write until about one-thirty, file, then try unsuccessfully to fall asleep ("After you write, your mind is whirling"), and finally doze off at around three, only to be awakened at 6 A.M. by her editors in Paris, who needed to edit her copy in time for the Tokyo deadline. However, neither fatigue nor the brutal weather could diminish her zeal for work; she was delighted to have been seated beside P. Diddy's mother, Janice Combs, at the Sean John show, and she described in detail Mrs. Combs's champagne mink coat and gold miniskirt. Menkes also spent an afternoon in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, meeting some young designers, and an evening in Williamsburg. In the resulting column, she proclaimed Brooklyn the new downtown.

Outside the tents in Bryant Park, where Fashion Week is held, the talk was of duct tape and sarin gas, but inside, once the lights went down and the music started, it was all miniskirts and sixties innocence—"faux optimism," as Menkes described the mood—with accompaniment by Dylan, the Beatles, the Stones. Menkes seemed annoyed by the Americans' empty-headed return to the styles of her youth; she was outraged by Tommy Hilfiger's "slight and silly rerun of Courrèges and Mary Quant," as she wrote in her column. (In the same column, she also gave the twenty-two-year-old designer Zac Posen a short lecture on the meaning of high fashion: "It may be inevitable that a generation brought up on easy sportswear yearns for the old-fashioned elegance of couture. But there is a fine line between complexity and complication.")

"New York is such a vibrant city," Menkes told me when we met for lunch, not far from the tents, "but that's not really reflected on the runway. This is partly because, with so many of the shows, there is no designer behind them at all—it's just a management team. Also, there's the timing. We always used to do New York after the European women's collections. It was as if, after eating this rich meal, New York was a salad or a refreshing sorbet—it cleansed the palate. But when you do New York before Europe it seems dull—more like the fag end of last season than a new one." Menkes continued, "I don't really understand what's going on in America. I see everything from a Parisian perspective, and, to me, New York's Fashion Week, with all its sponsors and branding and whatnot, and its obsession with celebrities—it all seems very tawdry indeed."

I asked what would become of her Parisian perspective as the *Tribune* was branded by the *Times*.

"In my world," Menkes said, "Paris will always be the center." ♦



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PROFILES

THE WOLF AT THE DOOR

Vanessa Beecroft's provocative art is inextricably tied to her obsession with food.

BY JUDITH THURMAN

The Italian performance artist Vanessa Beecroft lives with her American husband, Greg Durkin, and their seventeen-month-old son, Dean, in an isolated house off a dirt road on Long Island's North Shore. Durkin, who has worked in the movie industry as a financial analyst but is currently a graduate student in sociology, found the place by searching the Internet for properties that were within commuting distance of Manhattan and had an indoor pool. Beecroft suffers from exercise bulimia—a compulsion to burn off calories that she considers excessive—and until recently she liked to swim a hundred laps every day. She also used to take ten-hour hikes, and she still goes for vigorous long walks through the nature reserve that surrounds her house. Before the baby started to toddle, she sometimes carried him along, slung on the ledge of a bony hip. "When I was pregnant, I didn't allow myself to relax for a minute," she says. "I spent all day swimming, training, and doing aerobics. I've since slacked off a bit, because I find that yoga is the only workout that doesn't make me too hungry."

Bulimia is an eating disorder epidemic among young women. (Beecroft is thirty-three.) In its most common form, a ravenous binge—equivalent to several meals, or even to several days' worth of food—is closely followed by a session of self-induced reverse peristalsis. The practice is both psychologically addictive and socially contagious. According to an unscientific survey of my friends under thirty, there isn't a dormitory bathroom in the country that doesn't reek of vomit. Older women suffer from bulimia, too, probably in smaller numbers, although treatment statistics do not, obviously, provide a reliable head count. Actors, dancers, and models are particularly susceptible, and so are young male athletes, like wrestlers and jockeys, who have weight goals to meet. There is an extensive clinical and self-help literature devoted to the disorder (which is commonly medicated with antidepressants), along with dozens of Web sites and chat rooms, some of them clandestine trysting places for defiant anorexics and bulimics, who fondly call themselves by the dollish names "ana" and "mia," and who warn intruders seeking to cure them or girls "in recovery" not to enter. Members of the sisterhood trade pictures of their idols (Calista Flockhart and Lara Flynn Boyle are especially admired), proud accounts of their sometimes lethally ascetic practices, and advice on concealing them.

It is hard to think of a human stain—an addiction, sin, perversion, or taboo—that doesn't, in a shame-free age, have its bard. Bulimia, however, is one of the most intractably unglamorous of dirty secrets, as humiliating as incontinence. Bulimics transcend their own threshold of disgust, although not easily the repulsion of others: they are a stealthy tribe. Clogged plumbing or rotten teeth sometimes give them away, but I have known women who have managed to conceal their daily rituals for years without getting caught by a parent or spouse. This interesting subject, one of propriety's last frontiers, has been largely neglected by creative artists, with a few exceptions, Beecroft being among the most notable. She has been working since her adolescence on a project called "XXX Book of Food": three hundred and sixty watercolors and drawings that she intends to publish in the form of a cube-shaped book divided into colored sections. (Bulimics often separate the courses of a binge with markers of taste and texture so that each stratum is visibly discrete and, during gluttony interruptus, can be carefully ticked off the elimination manifest.) "I used to eat by color," she explains, "all orange one day, all green, yellow, or red the next. I wanted my obsession made formally explicit." She started the book as a diary in the early nineteen-eighties with the intention of showing it, one day, to a doctor. The first four years of entries were lost by a typist, but the remaining six (1987-93) make up a log of every morsel (or nearly) that she consumed, and a journal in words and pictures of the feelings—predominantly self-loathing—that her struggle with a recalcitrant appetite aroused, and still does. I found the cumulative tedium of this strange artifact poignant and compelling. So, perhaps, will anyone who, like Beecroft, has "wished demonically for something horrible to happen to me just to make me thin," and who has "weighed every one of my life's experiences on the scale of how many kilos I have gained or lost from it. In the end, I don't even care if people say I'm a good artist. I only care about whether or not I'm fat."

Beecroft's self-discipline is Spartan, though she told me that she "has to have something very bad every day, like a piece of cake or a drink." Most of the bulimics I have known or read about aren't so abstemious. They, too, gauge goodness and badness on a kitchen scale, and they may diet as strenuously as she does, but they relieve themselves of the tension inherent in long-term deprivation with vast quantities of delicious, forbidden junk. A woman in her seventies who has been a compulsive eater for most of her "petty, claustrophobic life" once told me that her daily "sprees" were its only source of "spontaneity and free choice," and while she knew they were "sick" and "wasteful," she couldn't bear to give them up for that reason. Beecroft's diary, however, covers a period when she lived on a monotonous regimen of the same health foods day after day: a bowl of unsea-

"Bulimia is, among other things, a form of research for my work," Beecroft says. Photograph by Ruven Afanador.

"I can't believe 'Jackass' wasn't nominated. What was the Academy thinking?"

• •

soned brown rice, an apple, a serving of raw carrots or home-baked bread. "I tried to throw them up," she recalls, "but I couldn't, and when I started retching blood, I had to stop"—which is why she switched to extreme exercise as a purgative. "In my diary, I use the word 'vomit' metaphorically. It stands for the violence of the intention." Not merely, however. Once, as a teen-ager, she smashed a bag of walnuts with a hammer and ate the contents shell and all, winding up in an emergency room with acute peritonitis. The doctor told her that she needed a psychiatrist. She found one who had belonged to the Red Brigades. "I got really fascinated by his politics," she recalled. "Unfortunately, he was too expensive." (Eating disorders and Maoism seem to share a common ground: they are a form of utopian moral extremism—a belief that, with enough ruthlessness, it is possible to achieve perfection.)

Beecroft plans to exhibit the book at a major retrospective of her work that opens in October at Italy's leading museum of modern art, the Castello di Rivoli, outside Turin. She is also willing to discuss her enthrallment to food with passionate candor, and to describe its role in the tableaux vivants—some fifty to date—that have made her a controversial star of the performance-art world. These spectacles, the initial ones produced on a shoestring, the later ones expensively staged, have been widely admired by curators and critics (but also frequently condemned as voyeuristic and exploitative). They feature large groupings of nude or undressed "girls" who stand mutely for several hours in a gallery or museum, occasionally breaking ranks to stretch or to sprawl, but remaining, in principle, strictly impassive to an audience that is, of course, fully clothed. In the earliest works, Beecroft assembled an eloquently motley collection of fleshy and slim bodies. Emboldened and enriched by her success, she hired scores of uniformly thin, depilated beauties and arranged them as human colonnades. ("I think of them as architecture," she says.) On different occasions, their trappings have included white bras, black body paint, Heidi wigs, control-top briefs, G-strings, gladiator sandals, panty hose, fedoras, faux-mink chubbies, and four-inch stilettoes. A percentage of the women, especially at the beginning, suffered from eating disorders, and they were all volunteers—friends, fellow art students, or interesting-looking female specimens whom she picked up on the street. Yet even when she started recruiting professional models and paying them their going rate, they had to be willing to undergo a painful (if boastworthy) trial of extreme discomfort and exposure. Beecroft herself doesn't participate in a performance once she has given her instructions to the troops: she's a general rather than a first lieutenant. Her charisma, however, has increased with her visibility, and women gladly, one might even say hungrily, do her bidding and become her tools. Designers—among them Miuccia Prada, Tom Ford, and Manolo Blahnik—have been eager to contribute props. A photographer and video crews document the pieces (Beecroft used to do the photography herself), and those images are the commodity that Beecroft's dealers market to collectors. "Reproduction glamorizes the experience and leaches it of ambiguity and emotion," she says flatly. "I'm sorry it's necessary. Pictures of the girls out of context make the work look too sexy. To me, the actual performances aren't sexy at all. They're about shame: the shame of the audience and, to a lesser extent, of the girls, but most of all my own."

Beecroft had doubted that a local taxi-driver could find her hideout in the woods, so when I arranged to visit her for the first time she offered to meet my train from the city. She pulled up in a silver BMW and apologized profusely for arriving a little late. With Dean in tow, she looked like the stressed Madonna in a moody, cinematic parable about suburban anomie. (Her mother, she says, was pregnant with her when her parents first saw Antonioni's "Blowup," which starred Vanessa Redgrave, and they liked the name.) Being lovely to look at and extremely photogenic has not hurt a career that bridges the worlds of art and fashion. Beecroft has a patrician forehead—smooth and high—and prominent cheekbones. Huge, thickly fringed brown eyes are set in a pale face dusted with freckles that was framed, when I met her last spring, by unruly russet curls. (She has since shaved her head. "I saw one too many Holocaust movies," she told me.) Her strong features have a fragile aura of hectic radiance. A tattoo artist in Milan with an upper-class clientele decorated one forearm from the elbow to the wrist with a lurid, Vargas-style pinup, and the other arm with a merchant seaman's anchor and eagle. Elsewhere on her body there are fish and a Japanese dragon. These tough-guy badges of bad-girlhood are at odds with her ladylike appearance, and particularly with the enormous diamond engagement ring on her left hand. She and Durkin, who is seven years her junior, met on the street outside the Williamsburg loft she used to rent. He was looking for an apartment in the neighborhood, where bohemians mingle with recent immigrants from Eastern Europe, and Beecroft mistook him for a Russian. He has the dark-haired beauty of an Attic swain, a lifetime of experience with overbearing older women, and he proposed impulsively after a three-month courtship. "When Greg gave me the ring, I said, 'Oh, thanks,' and tossed it across the bed," she says. "I assumed it came from a vending machine at the mall." (It came from his maternal great-grandmother, although the fortune it represented has since diminished.) Yet Durkin's courage—or foolhardiness—impressed her. "Vanessa is an extreme feminist," her photographer, Dusan Reljin, says, "except that she looks for a strong man to control her." She struck me more like the wild girl in a folktale, bewitched as a punishment for her temper, who turns into a howling wolf and devours her prospective liberators. Her wedding in Portofino became a "project," with costumes by Prada, Trussardi, and Alessandro dell'Acqua—the entire bridal party and all the guests wore white—and a reception on a soccer field hosted by the editor of Italian *Vogue*.

The fame and shock value of Beecroft's work have made her a public figure, so she is never unconscious of being on display. She moves with a dancer's litheness and poses for photographs with the aplomb of a mannequin. Her voice is seductive and a little fey: the feather clapper in an iron bell. One sometimes has the impression of a lonely virago doing a wishful though also slightly contemptuous impersonation—almost a takeoff—of a babydoll. Beecroft's father is English, and she speaks his language fluently with a lilting, percussive accent. Her Italian is exceptionally cultivated and formal, even old-fashioned (her mother taught classics and literature)—pure of slang and rich in subjunctives. Most people change character when they switch in and out of their mother tongue, but there is very little discontinuity between Beecroft's English and Italian personas, perhaps because the uncensored stream of her confidences seems, in contrast to its grammatical precision, so primal.

Fashion and the acquisition of clothes "obsess" Beecroft, she admits, almost as much as eating does, for similar reasons. She claims to shop in "a ravenous and stupid frenzy—everything I buy is a mistake"—yet she dresses in the height of style, even in the country, almost invariably in a minimalist white or black designer outfit and the kind of Capezio pumps worn by tango dancers. Beecroft is about five feet seven, but people often perceive her as Amazonian or statuesque, perhaps because of her outsize vitality, or perhaps because she is rarely without heels. (The platforms and spikes that the girls wear in her performances are, she says, their "pedestals.") The afternoon we first met, her own pedestals were red and her Prada ensemble immaculately white. I expected a wraith, but her weight usually hovers around sixty kilos, she says—a hundred and thirty-two pounds, most of it muscle. It is not uncommon for a runway model of six feet to weigh fifteen or even twenty pounds less than Beecroft does, so, even at her thinnest, she is never emaciated. "I aspired to be as thin as an anorexic," she admits. "I loved fasting once I got past the pain of the first few days, which I did with the help

ALL LAWYERED UP AND NO PLACE TO GO

of amphetamines, but I never went too far." It was partly a lack of nerve. Anorexics are aggressive and bulimics are lazier, she says, "but ultimately I didn't want to waste myself. Bulimia is, among other things, a form of research for my work: a source of information about what's going on inside me."

When we reached the house, which Beecroft bought for the family when they outgrew the Brooklyn loft (her art has been lucrative), she led me through a series of monochromatic, sparsely furnished rooms. The architecture is mid-century Nassau County modern: cedar siding, low ceilings, track lighting, sliding glass doors that open to a series of decks, and a rec room on the lower level, off the garage, that she said she planned to use as an office. The previous owner tacked a tower onto the house, a lighthouse-style bedroom suite where, in another era, swinging or pot parties might have taken place. Beecroft retreats to it when she wants to escape her tempestuous marriage, or to "hide" from Dean's nanny, who has a "bossy attitude" and a big appetite, and whose eating habits she finds "oppressive." "I think the tower could be great for a writer. Come do a book there," she said. When I asked why she didn't commandeer this aerie for her own work instead of holing up in a sunless tomb that was dank even on a hot June day, she admitted that the thought hadn't occurred to her: "I gravitate to the shadows." But the funkiness of the décor and its Blair Witch-y setting in the deep woods (she chose the isolation in part to be far from the temptations of grocery or convenience shops) are, in fact, eminently chic, and one can imagine Steven Meisel shooting a Versace layout in the kitchen or by the pool. "I didn't touch anything," Beecroft says, "not even to paint the walls white, because if I start I'll have to tear the place completely apart, and I despair beforehand of getting it perfect enough. I need everything to be perfect." Bulimia is also a demented form of perfectionism.

Beecroft may resent having to fill her refrigerator with fattening treats for the nanny ("She doesn't understand that if she leaves half an egg bagel on the counter it's hard for me not to finish it"), and she generally tries to fast until dinnertime, but she graciously offered me yogurt and a selection of fruit, which I declined (I had picnicked on the train, since, under the circumstances, I could hardly expect solid refreshment at my destination), and we sat at a table in the sun with bottles of water. I was relieved to see that her baby, who was then nine months old, had a healthy appetite, and whenever he started to fuss, Beecroft nursed him, though throughout the afternoon I noticed that she always proffered him the same breast. At one point, this imbalance began to feel almost physically painful to me, and, more out of politeness than for her own comfort, she shifted him to the other side. I also worried that Dean, who was crawling around the deck naked except for a diaper and a sunhat, would get splinters. He did, but his mother tweezed them out of his pudgy knees so tenderly and expertly that there was barely a whimper. Like an adolescent, Beecroft seems to lack any foresight for disaster—indeed, any sense of mortality. (Discretion, a form of prudence, is equally alien to her.) When she fights with Greg, she told me, she sometimes takes the car out on the expressway late at night and floors the accelerator. "I'm sure nothing will happen," she says with nonchalance, although she conceded that she should probably get a driver's license. (She since has, though after failing the test twice, both times for recklessness.) In the course of our talks, which took place intermittently over ten months, she revealed a dazzling capacity for elation that was expressed in sudden, beatific bursts, like solar storms. Yet she seemed to possess not the slightest imagination for ordinary happiness.

"VB48," Vanessa Beecroft's 48th performance piece, took place in Genoa in 2001. A phala

When Beecroft describes her life's dramatis personae, the word "mean" recurs as a leitmotif. She uses it of her mother, who raised her on a macrobiotic diet; of her angelic-looking half sister; and of her "grave" and "soulful" young husband. He can sometimes be "as mean as possible, but I'm meaner to him—I tear men to pieces, so it is probably my fault." (After an explosive row this autumn, in a Los Angeles airport hotel, the police were called to intervene, and they handcuffed Beecroft, with polite apologies, until she

Thirty black models in Manolo Blahniks, all but one of the women painted brown, stood for three hours in the Ducal Palace.

VB48.934.PD/PETE DRINKELL/COURTESY DEITCH PROJECTS, NY

calmed down.) Durkin's eighty-three-year-old maternal grandmother, Eunice Carrigan Schneck, with whom Beecroft feels a kinship, "is considered the meanest member of the family," especially toward her long-suffering daughter, Greg's mother, Sheril—a registered dietician. Sheril Durkin is a sinewy woman in her mid-fifties with a yearbook smile and a confiding manner that belie a hard life. She gave me her professional opinion that eating disorders are usually caused by "crazy mothers."

Sometimes, however, these difficult relatives are as inspiring to Beecroft as the protagonists of a Greek myth or tragedy. (I suppose that devouring one's children qualifies as bulimia.) She is flooded with compassion for their fatal flaws and respect for their powers of endurance. I also came to understand that she uses "meanness"—*cattiveria*—as a perverse compliment: the snarl of the beast defending the carcass of its prey, or of the prey that will not let itself be taken without a fight; the mordant pissiness of the unbowed—of all those who struggle and prevail. Asked to name the sentiment most foreign to her, Beecroft responds, without hesitation, *clemenza*—pity. Among the gods, as a classical scholar I knew once pointed out, Eros is the most willful, and he carries the day in Olympian contests because desire is the principle of change. To which one might add, Voracity is the motor of desire.

Sheril, Eunice, and Eunice's ninety-year-old sister, Ruby Keller—the blithe spirit of the family—were the central figures in a curious documentary that Beecroft shot just before Christmas in a suite at the Plaza Hotel, a performance that she described to me ahead of time as "Euripides meets Grey Gardens." It was supposed to be "like a little trial at which we interrogate the truth of their lives—the truth of lost youth, lost dreams and love, and of approaching death." At times, it seemed more like a session of fashion therapy for seniors. Beecroft raided her own closet for eveningwear of sentimental value, including a lamé sheath of her mother's and a white Saint Laurent wedding dress that she bought for a potential ceremony "long before I had a man." She also designed some striking, futuristic costumes in polyester jersey. Her elfin friend Tara Subkoff ("a miniature Catherine Deneuve," as Beecroft accurately put it) acted as the stylist and wardrobe mistress. Subkoff is the designer behind Imitation of Christ, an exclusive line of one-of-a-kind garments that could be described as mutant-vintage. "I don't like my work to be pigeonholed either as fashion or as art—I'd love it to be considered science," Subkoff said. "Vanessa's work is also hard to categorize. She has a very visual relationship with her relatives and their clothing. They're like her paper dolls."

The piece consisted of three vignettes, each lasting about thirty minutes. The first two went off smoothly. Beecroft dressed the old ladies in shocking pink and red long dresses, and a makeup artist touched up their faces and hair. They seemed to enjoy being painted and fussed over. Then they were told to stretch out side by side on the queen-sized, faux-Empire *lit à la polonaise*. The composition had a macabre charm: two well-rouged if lumpy bodies lying in state on a plush bier, in a powder-blue room, with the snowy park bouncing wintry sunlight through the window. Any embalmer would have been proud to present a grieving family with such a deluxe memento mori. Ruby fell asleep and snored softly, and Eunice cracked testy jokes from her rigid, supine position.

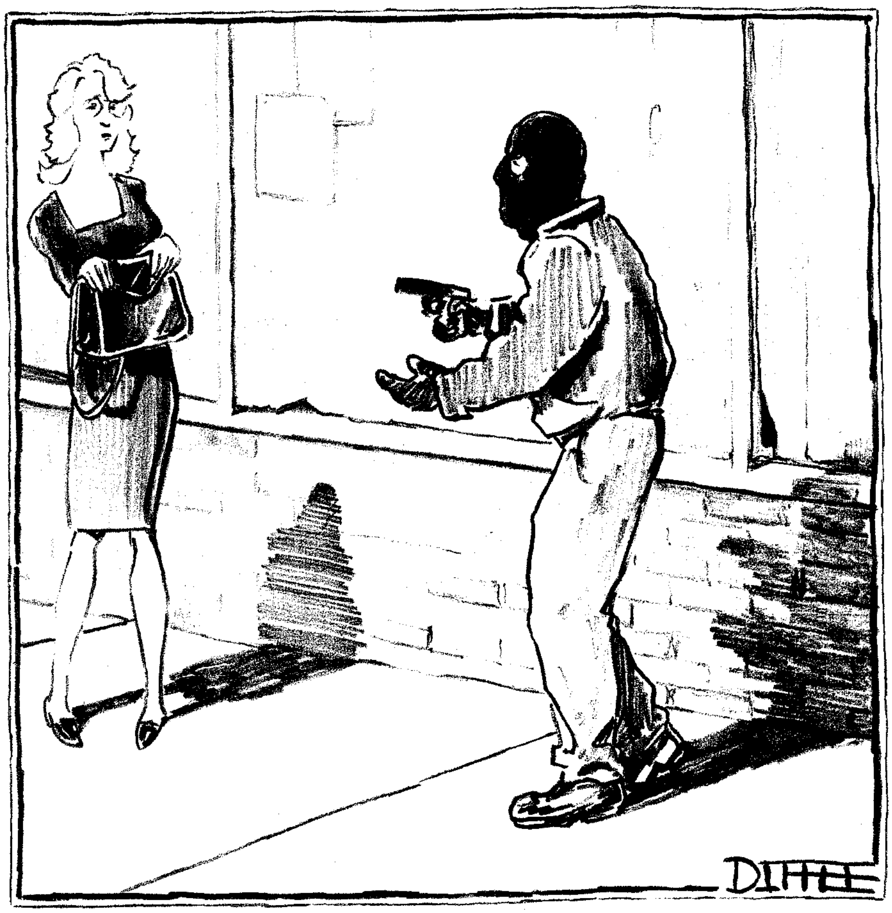
In the second vignette, Sheril entered in a red chiffon cocktail dress from Rive Gauche and sat on the bed. "Vanessa loves to make people happy," she observed. "She's the best mother in the world, but she'll find out about sons and mothers. I spoiled Greg rotten because he had such a tough childhood. His father abandoned us, then his sister died. Now his wife's the one paying the price." Between takes, the three women made an amiable effort to address the themes of lost youth, dreams, and love, although Ruby and Eunice had nothing but "happy memories." Eunice once owned a shop that sold women's bathing suits in the Hamptons. "You'd be amazed at how many men wanted to try them on," she said. She also recalled that her wedding guests had, during the war, chipped in their gas coupons to send her on a honeymoon. On a vacation with her husband, Ruby met the Pope. Sheril's marriage was, she said, "blissful" for the first seven years. But Eunice rolled her eyes with withering scorn when Sheril confessed that she had forgiven her husband, a Vietnam vet, for running off with another woman.

During the lunch break, I was surprised to see Beecroft eat several chocolate bars in quick succession. She had told me that she was going on "an anti-yeast diet." She had a heated discussion over the phone with her mother in Italy, then "broke up" with her husband, who was home with the baby. (They quarrel and reconcile regularly.) "Greg thinks I turn everything into an opera," she said sadly. Eunice read her favorite gossip column through a lorgnette and complained about her "disgustingly large" room-service pastrami sandwich. Sheril polished off a platter of roast beef and a plate of cookies. Ruby, in the meantime, was playing solitaire. But when it was time for the actors to dress for the third vignette—"approach of death"—trouble erupted. Eunice got huffy, and refused "to play along with this hysterical nonsense any longer." She specifically objected to lying like a corpse next to her sister in the costumes that Beecroft had laid out for them: white bridal outfits cut like christening gowns, with head-hugging cowls and, over the cowls, billowing tulle veils. "You can't make a fool out of me," Eunice said, scowling and shaking her blond flip.

"No one will ever recognize us without our double chins," Ruby suggested brightly. She had already obediently donned her cowl, and she looked like the freshly hatched newborn of a wrinkly alien species.

I thought that things were finally going rather well, or at least adhering more closely to the Euripidean scenario, but Beecroft was distraught. She told Eunice that she had spent ten thousand dollars of her own money to mount the production, and now she stood to lose her investment. "There are some things you can't buy and I'm one of them," Eunice retorted. "I'll give you the money back." She disappeared into the walk-in closet, ostensibly to look for her checkbook, but returned with a glass of amber liquid that Sheril brusquely snatched away. Subkoff, who is about sixty years younger than Eunice, had gamely volunteered to take her place on the bed, and was suiting up. "This whole thing is very 'The Handmaid's Tale,' " she sighed as she fluffed her veil and prepared to salvage the scene. "I wish my own old aunt could see me. She's a nun."

Beecroft has been accused of staging "sex shows" in the name of feminism, of "objectifying women," and of "pandering to the male gaze." Critics have also signalled the "sadomasochistic" subtext of performances that are heavily influenced, as the artist readily admits, by the work of Helmut Newton—who photographed Beecroft for *Vogue*, two years ago, in a minuscule leather bikini. Surely these terms of judgment are too blunt with overuse and sanctimony to be penetrating. A refined appetite, however, demands fresh stimulation. The gourmets of the art world are especially picky. And fifty pro-



"Gimme the purse and the matching pumps."

ductions based on the same formula—their impact inversely proportional to their glamour—inevitably begin to pall. Beecroft knows, she told me, that she needs to move on.

But Subkoff's casual reference to Margaret Atwood's 1986 novel offers a shrewder insight into Beecroft and her œuvre than much of the academic debate about them in the art press. "The Handmaid's Tale" describes a totalitarian future in a fundamentalist America, where young women are kept as reproductive slaves by aging patriarchs of the religious right and their barren wives, and ritually raped by both spouses. (The conceit seemed flimsy to me when the book was first published. Recent history has given it a faintly prophetic glimmer.) I still find the novel more persuasive as a work of erotic fiction—a fantasy of incest and bondage—than as an Orwellian dystopia. Atwood the artist had a lot to say about the pathology of desire, but Atwood the militant wouldn't let it be said. She wasn't willing to tell the truth about women's anarchic feelings—particularly their voracity. Beecroft is.

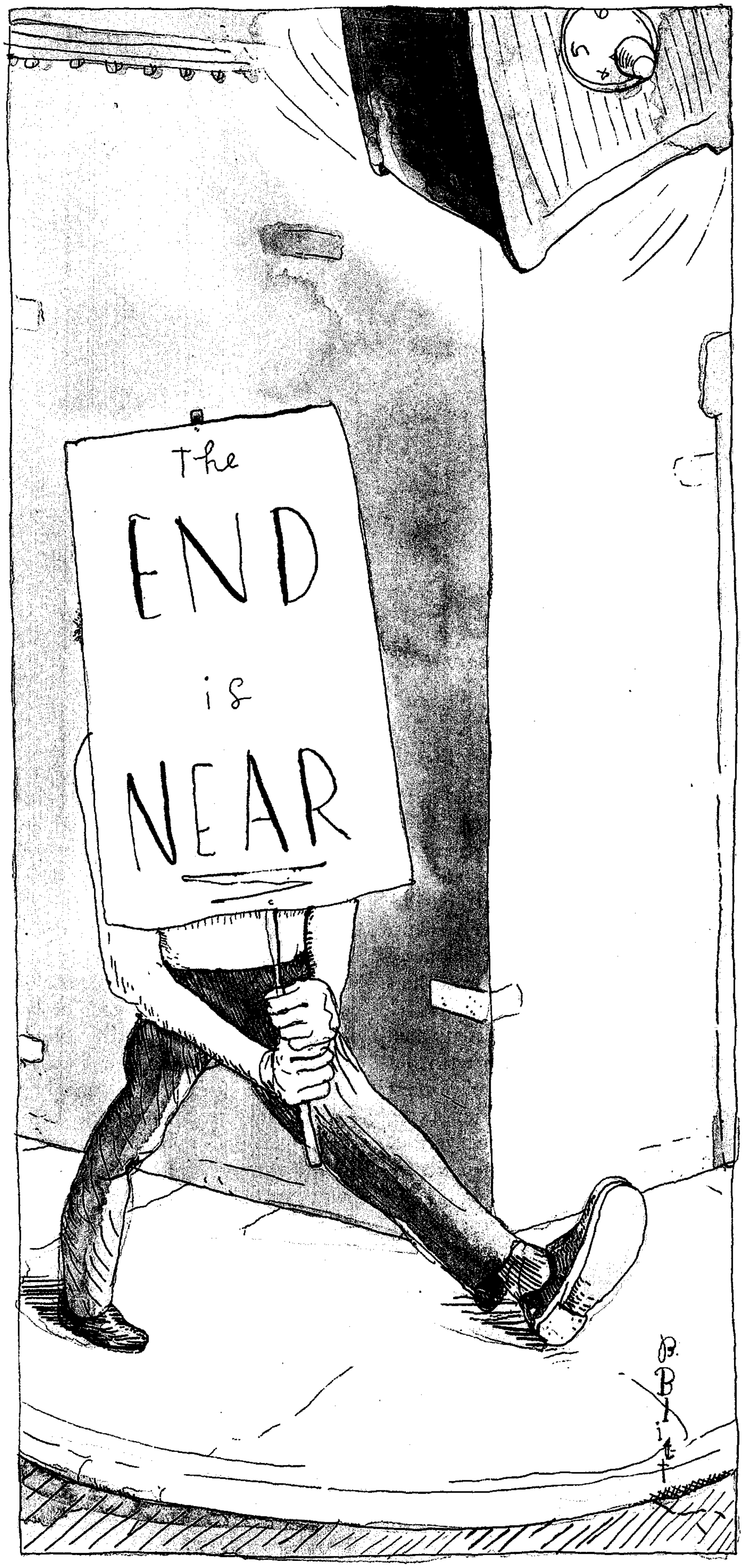
"This is the coldest winter I can remember."

Human beings of both sexes eroticize their primal bonds with those who feed them. When they are starved for nurture at an early age, their character builds not upon a solid core but upon a void. To others, they may seem sturdy and accomplished, but they know that at any moment, like a house built over a sinkhole, they can vanish into it. They comfort themselves with the image of a magical Provider whose perfect love will satisfy them once and for all. Binging on sex or food tantalizes them with a fleeting taste of completeness. (So does bulimic shopping. The closet is a maw, and clothes, like our infantile selves, are full of promise, though vacant of life until we inflate them.) But the insatiably hungry revert to blaming their partners or their appetites—and to handing out punishment accordingly—for their inevitable relapse into the void. Their lives are a restless quest for relief from want in which the strong take the offensive. They attempt to recover an illusion of wholeness through domination, and they become the sadists and the predatory seducers of both sexes. The weak experiment, perhaps no less aggressively, with some form of defensive self-starvation. Their voluntary privations feel superior to the despair of the famished child, which was suffered helplessly. In Beecroft's art and life, those two strategies converge. Most hollow souls dissemble the shame of their emptiness. She has turned hers inside out.

Beecroft's parents separated when she was two. She moved with her mother to a farmhouse in an olive forest near the town of Malcesine, on the slopes above Lake Garda, where they lived, she says, "without men, a telephone, or a car." Her younger brother was raised by their grandparents. He grew up to be a lawyer. Her father stayed in London, where he sold classic Bentleys, dabbled in philosophy, and studied the Cabala. He eventually had another son and daughter. Beecroft has been painting a series of portraits that depict her younger sister, Jennifer, as a dangerously beautiful and sullen-looking punk Lolita with clumpy mascara and a greasy tan. "I paid her a lot of money to pose," she adds, "because it made us more equal. I didn't exploit her."

The younger daughter knew their father as the elder one never did, and perhaps for that reason, Beecroft speculates, "he doesn't interest her, while I idealized him." Andrew Beecroft, she says, "is a smoker, a drinker, a dandy, and a decadent—very lean and pale, with pinkish-yellow hair." He loves the company of "old noblewomen broken at heart." For years they had no contact. "I went looking for him when I was fifteen, but he dismissed my energy as being 'too negative,'" Beecroft says. "So I returned to London the next year, hoping to impress him with my 'positivity,' but I couldn't. I thought he was the most beautiful man in the world. Our encounter left me with a deep sense of failure. Now we have an intellectual relationship."

Her parents, Beecroft says, were children of the sixties. "My mother is strange and big-boned, with strong, even mannish features, but still beautiful and womanly." She sees her as "huge," with a body "like a piece of sculpture." (In photographs, she looks to me like the matron from the lid of an Etruscan sarcophagus, though not so



BARRY BLITT

benign.) "She never cared about the girlie stuff. I had to hide my first copy of *Vogue* from her—she disapproved." They lived "in chaos," Beecroft says, "but we followed a strict macrobiotic diet. The neighbors called us 'the foreigners.' They ate pasta with rabbit sauce, and we never had scheduled meals: just home-baked bread, whole grains, and vegetables, most of them raw." On the day her mother did the baking, when the loaves were still warm from the oven, "I sometimes ate all of them, and then I would pass out." Bread, she says, makes her "crazy," and if she eats bread she doesn't want to be touched. "My mother would scream at me that it wasn't the bread that had made me sick, it was hatred for her." Now that she is a grown woman, Beecroft and her mother have become friends. Her mother, she says, doesn't remember the tempests between them: not "tearing the house apart," not "expecting autonomy of a six-year-old," not "crying for two days in a row and counting on me to take care of her—she has amnesia." At the same time, "she could be extremely loving and playful. She is well bred and a serious reader. She adores the cinema. I had probably seen every Bergman film by the time I was five. But I struck back at her when I was older, and I used to throw her clothes out if I didn't like them—they went right into the trash. I've always been very opinionated about how people should dress. My father, for example, dresses to perfection. I like clothes that are more photogenic and impractical than real. I own closets full of things to wear, but they're all the wrong size. I was never any good at shopping."

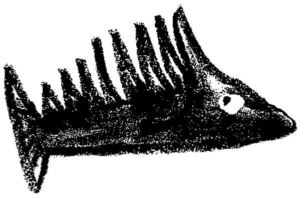
In 1980, when Beecroft was eleven, she and her mother moved to a village on the Ligurian coast, near Portofino. "My girlfriends there were anorexic," she recalls. "Three of them were the daughters of a rich, aristocratic family, and when I met them they were plump. Then they refused to eat anything but apples, and turned into skin and bones. I was so impressed. Their little brother was anorexic, too. I remember that he used to tear up thousand-lire notes, and chew them one little piece at a time. My mother sent me to a gynecologist when I was thirteen or fourteen, because my puberty was delayed. He gave me hormones, and I gained ten kilos. My breasts mushroomed—they became enormous. I felt Kafkaesque, and fell into a depression. About then, I read that Fassbinder made movies to feel real. I started drawing for the same reason."

At eighteen, Beecroft met a thirty-five-year-old Sicilian duke who, she says, "introduced me to a melancholic world of aristocrats right out of 'The Leopard.' I never slept with him—I slept with a friend of his who wasn't so noble—but we tooled around Palermo in a white Triumph. He gave me some lovely presents and he asked my mother formally for my hand. She didn't care one way or the other. As perhaps I've told you, we're a contemptuous family. Our problem is that we are too good for everybody but never good enough for ourselves. My clearest recollection about that period, however, is of gorging on grapes and cheese. When I came back from Palermo, I started keeping the food diary systematically, but I never intended to make it public. Then I changed my mind."

In 1988, Beecroft enrolled in art school, at the Brera, in Milan. "I needed a job," she claims, "because my mother wouldn't give me any money. So I became an au pair. Everybody in the family I worked for had red hair, like the dolls in the drawings I did as a child in Malcesine. It's my favorite color." (In her first American performance, staged in New York at P.S. 1, in 1994, the girls wore red Raggedy Anne wigs.) "I don't remember anything else about them—if, for example, they were happy or not—but they loved food. I never remember places or situations, just how my body looked in a mirror at the time." It was about then that she ate the bag of walnuts in their shells.

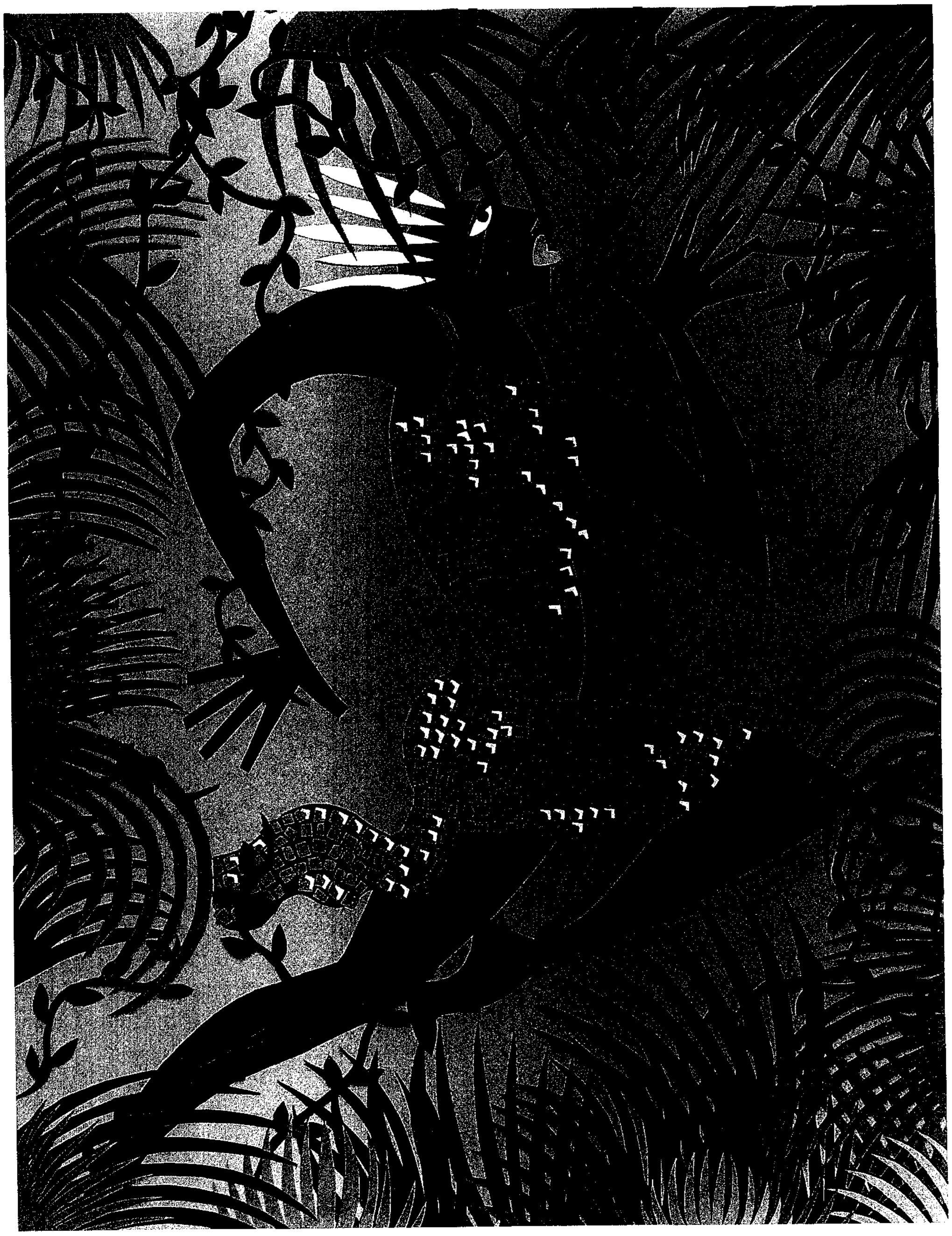
"I became a performance artist by mistake," Beecroft says. "There is something vulgar about the genre: its human reality. In high school, they told me my drawings looked like Schiele or Pontormo. But I never felt they were good or important enough to be taken seriously. I preferred the purity of Minimalist Art, which reminds me of that great epigram about mathematics: 'It fixes with an abstract formula the infinite variety of the world.' I still try to make each of my performances more abstract, harder, more artificial, more photogenic, less embodied than the one before. My career started because one of my professors invited me to participate in the annual school show. I wanted to call up all the girls I had been staring at for four years—girls who had something wrong or crazy about them but were still beautiful—and confine them in a room, and give each of them a piece of my underwear. So the girls became the work. I like to know that each of them has a weakness. Seeing other women's bodies is a relief, because even the most desirable body bears the scars of an imperfect life." Perfection, in its way, is an invisible scar. "There is nothing erotic about the way I look at women. I play on the girls' sexuality to offend the audience. I don't mind being irritating—rubbing people against their grain. My shrink tells me that I'm a bully. You could also say that I behave like the man of the family. I pay the bills, and I've punched Greg in the face." I asked her if she thinks of herself as a wife-beater. She considered the notion with respect. "I know that I am violent," she concluded, "and I'm not proud of it. But I need catharsis. My worst fear is to be held captive by niceness."

Last August, Beecroft staged what she said was to be her final tableau vivant, "but then I always say it's the last one and it never is," she added. (The film made at the Plaza in December was the first in a new series of tableaux morts that will feature members of her family, including her father, or his "surrogate," posing on hotel beds.) "VB51" took place over two days at a castle near Hanover, in Germany—Schloss Vinsebeck—that belongs to Count Wolff-Metternich. Beecroft had told me that the piece would feature "old" women, and evoke the mood of Resnais's "Last Year at Marienbad," but by mid-July she was still vague about the details. We poked around a thrift shop in Williamsburg together, and she bought a white chiffon prom dress that she thought she might use as a costume. I wondered how she would ever organize the logistics of a complex foreign production in a month's time. "I always improvise at the last minute," she explained. "I need the anxiety of imminent failure."



The performance featured an atypically mixed cast—diverse in age and type—including Beecroft's mother, mother-in-law, and sister; the actresses Hanna Schygulla and Irm Hermann; a contingent of the "decadent" local aristocracy, fine-boned Meissen sylphs; and an "anorexic" Italian art critic. All but two of the participants (Hermann and Schygulla) wore white. Beecroft's mother consented to appear with her eyes blackened like a raccoon, and the makeup accentuated the heaviness of her features and the feral panic of her gaze. Sheril Durkin, with her shag haircut and martyred smile, seemed out of place. Schygulla has become a chanteuse, and she had agreed to perform only if she could sing, Beecroft said. "O.K., I thought, let her: we'll edit it out." (But she didn't.) Fassbinder's sex goddess will be sixty next Christmas. Age has blurred her beauty, but it hasn't extinguished her raspy smolder. Robed ecclesiastically in black, she buzzed among the human statuary intoning, in three languages, snatches of the lyrics from Schubert's "Winterreise."

A tape of "VB51," edited to about ninety minutes, premières early in April in Paris, at the Cosmic Galerie. A Beecroft piece, however, is worth watching in its entirety. The work may seem frivolous initially, but the fashion and nudity prove to be a distraction. If bulimia is contagious, so is stoicism. As hours pass in silence and boredom—time slowing to a creep, the way it does on a long flight, for the duration of a fast, or minding a baby—one becomes aware, viscerally, of all the cravings, pangs, chills, yawns, oozings, aches, itches, yearnings, blushes, and impatience that the women are braving and suppressing, and of one's own. Beecroft may belabor an idea or exalt a whim, but her art conspires with your nerves to hold you captive of everything unbearable that you have to contain.♦

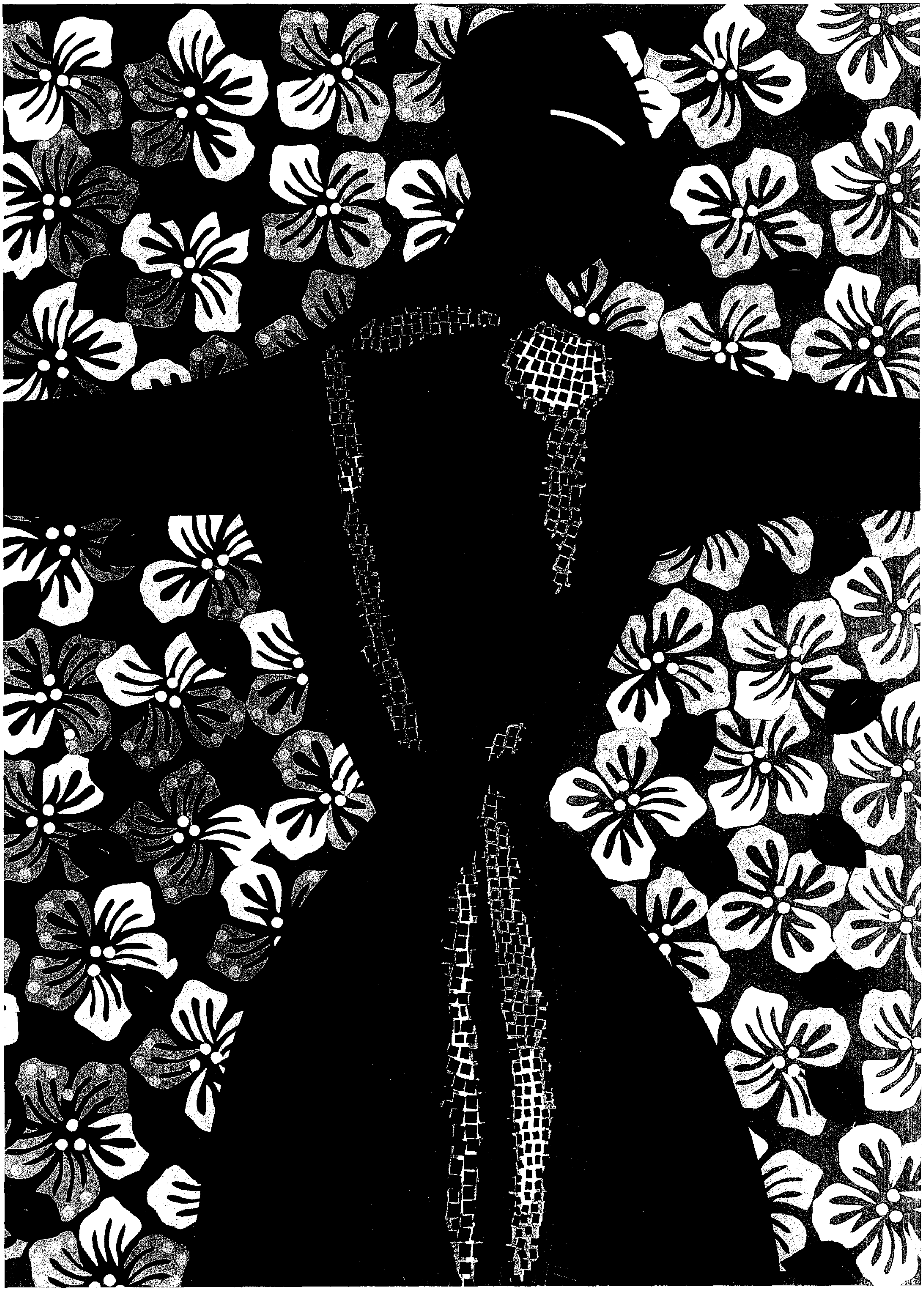


SKETCHBOOK

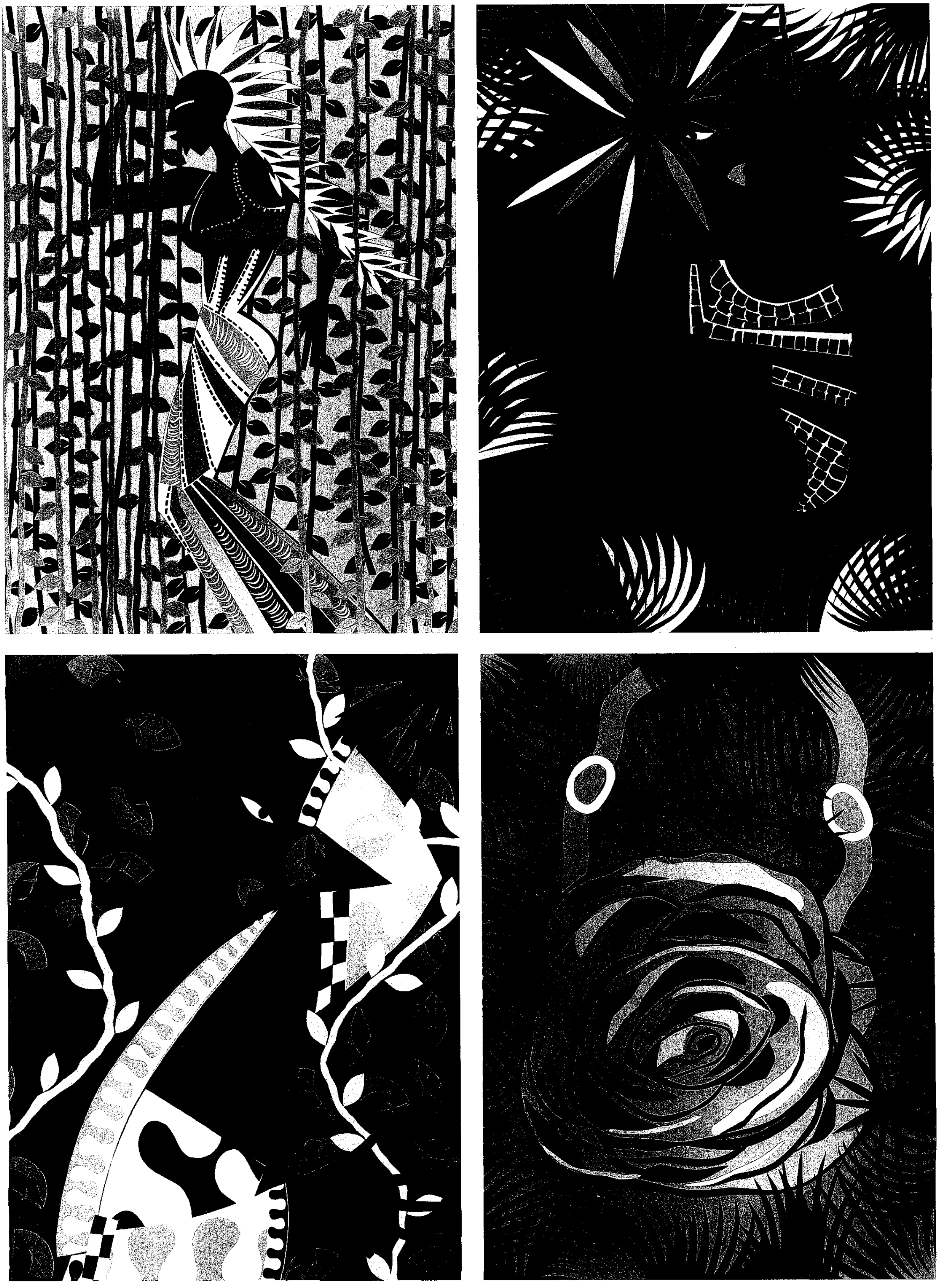
AMAZON GRACE

This season, the call of the wild has lured designers into the rain forest.

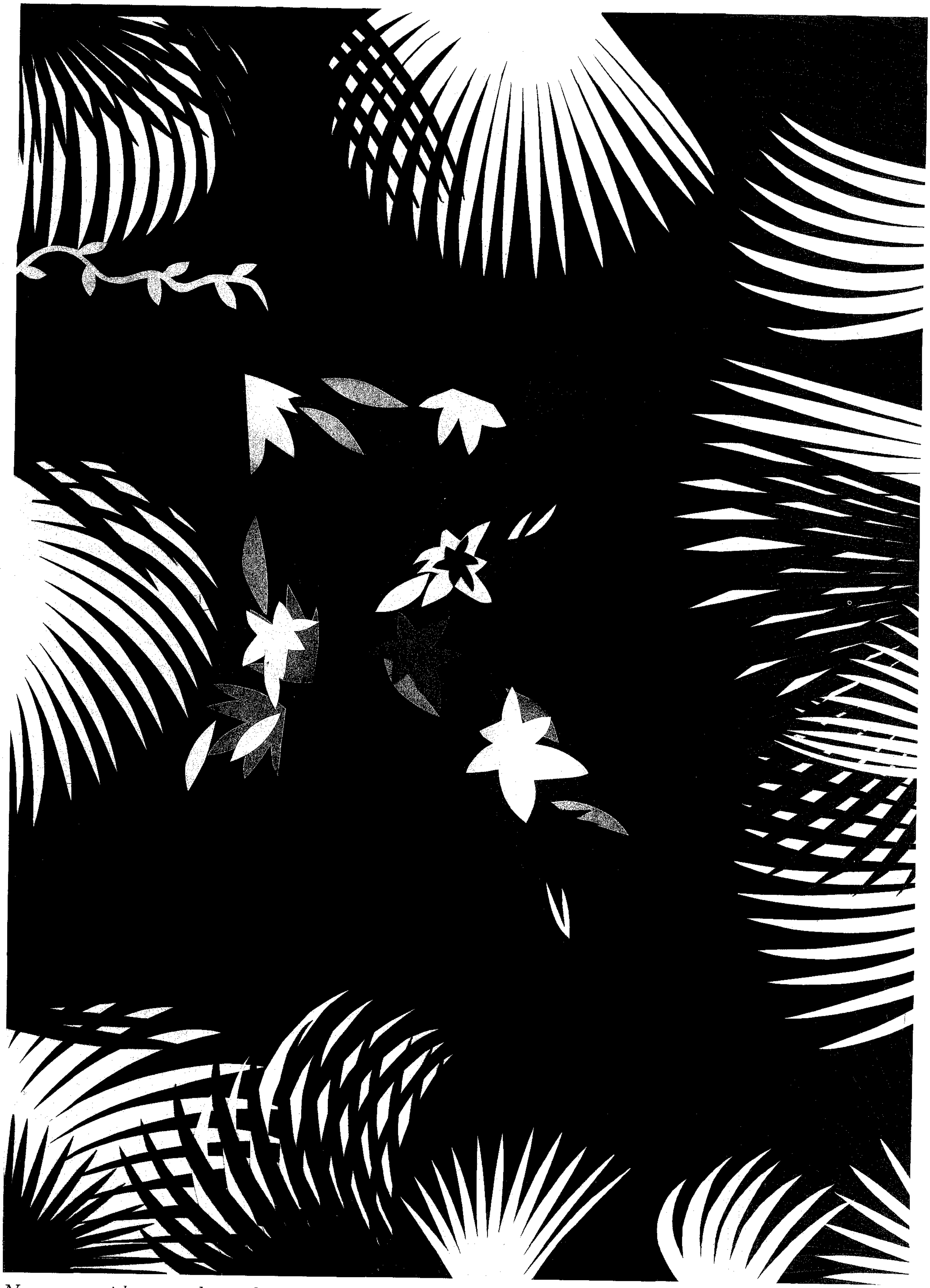
BY MICHAEL ROBERTS



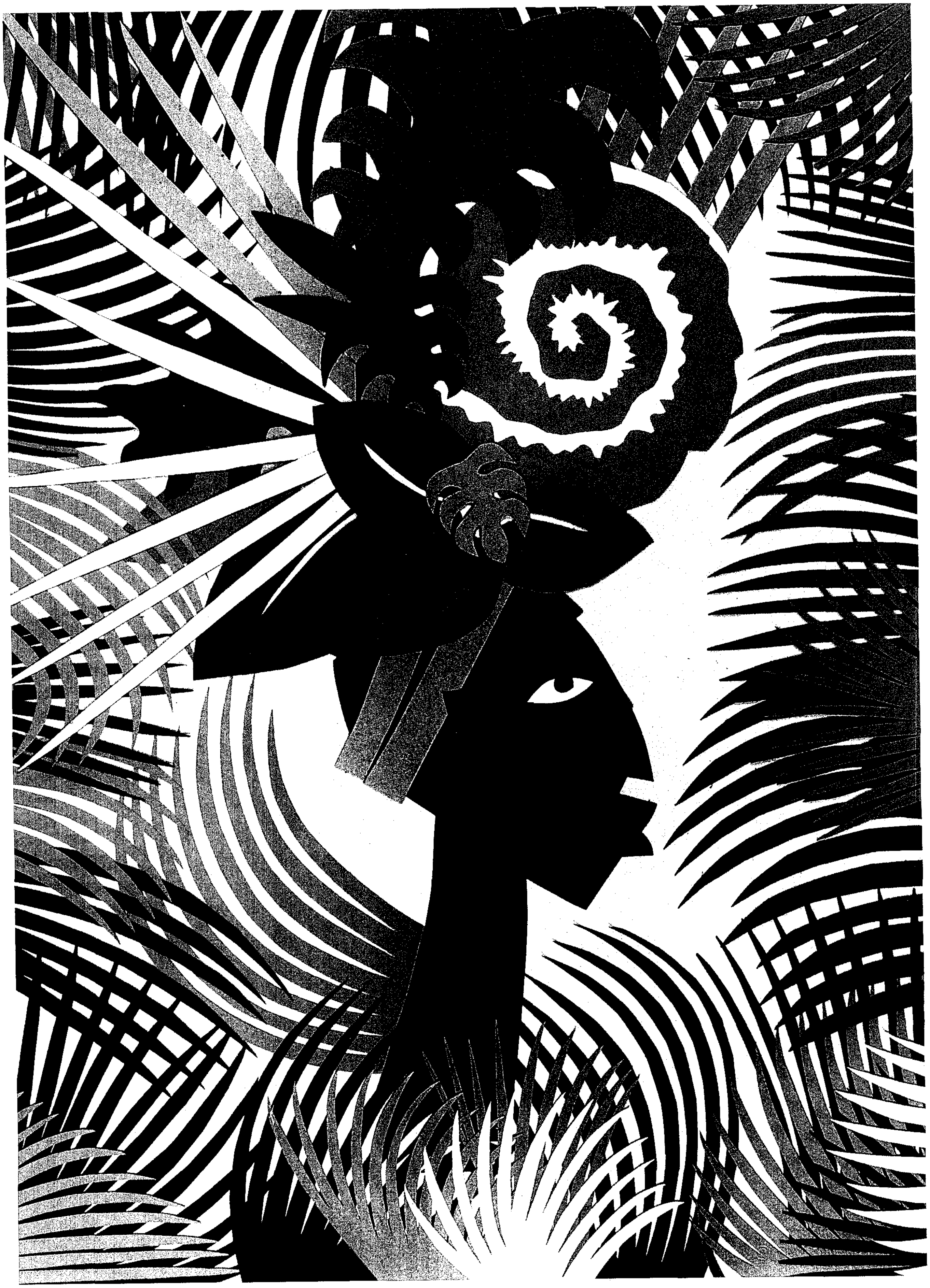
Left: Dress with simulated crocodile scales, by John Galliano for Dior. Above: Felt coat with crocodile back, by Azzedine Alaïa.



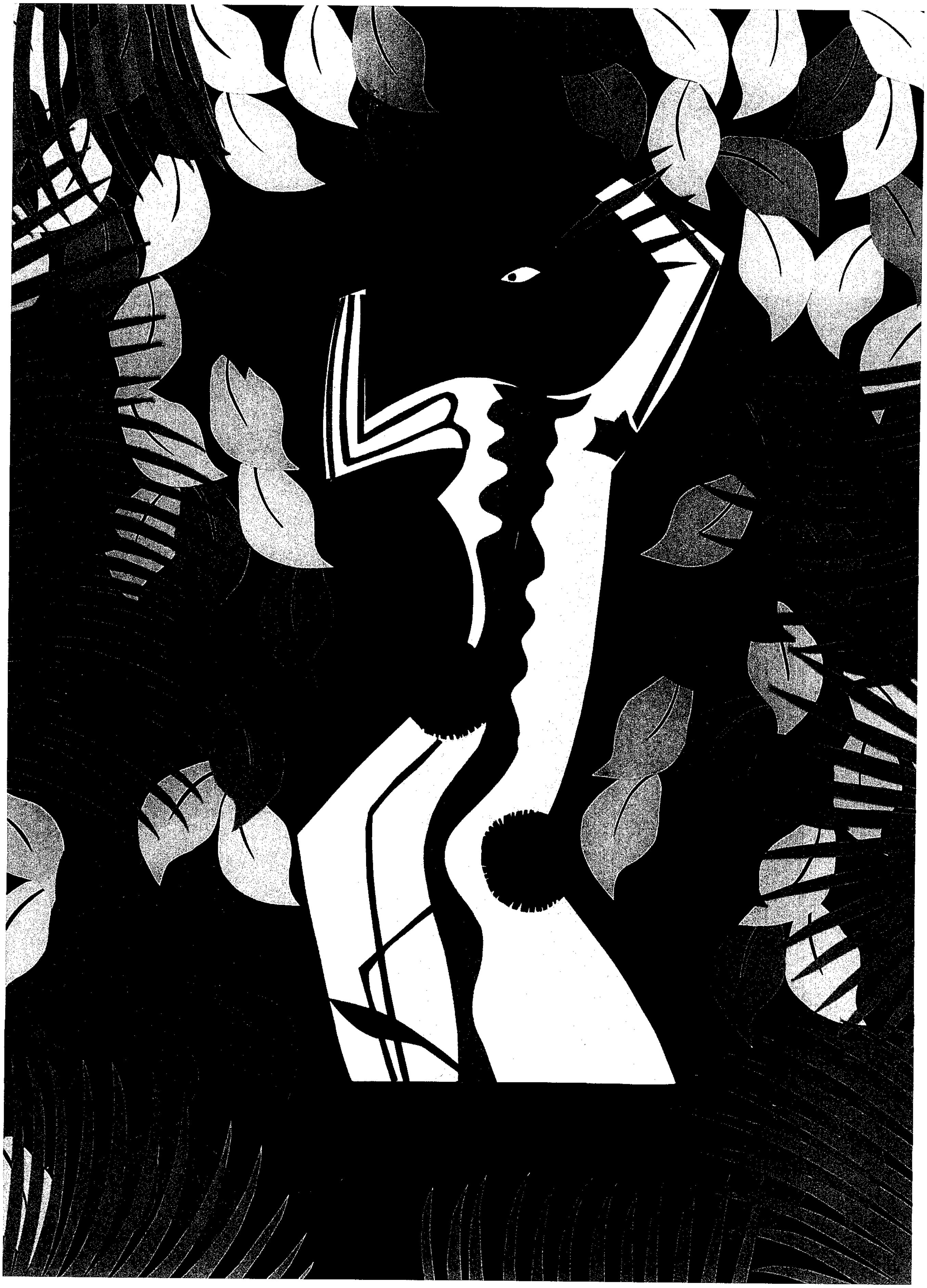
Clockwise from top left: Jean Paul Gaultier's patchwork leather couture gown; Alexander McQueen's python bikini with hat by Philip Treacy; napa-leather "Flower" bag by Tom Ford/YSL; Christian Lacroix's jersey top in an archival print for Emilio Pucci.



Narrow-cut suède trousers decorated with kidskin and suède appliqués of assorted jungle leaves by Julien Macdonald for Givenchy.



Three-dimensional jungle turban by Stephen Jones for Julien Macdonald in acrylic, acetate, and wired cotton canvas.

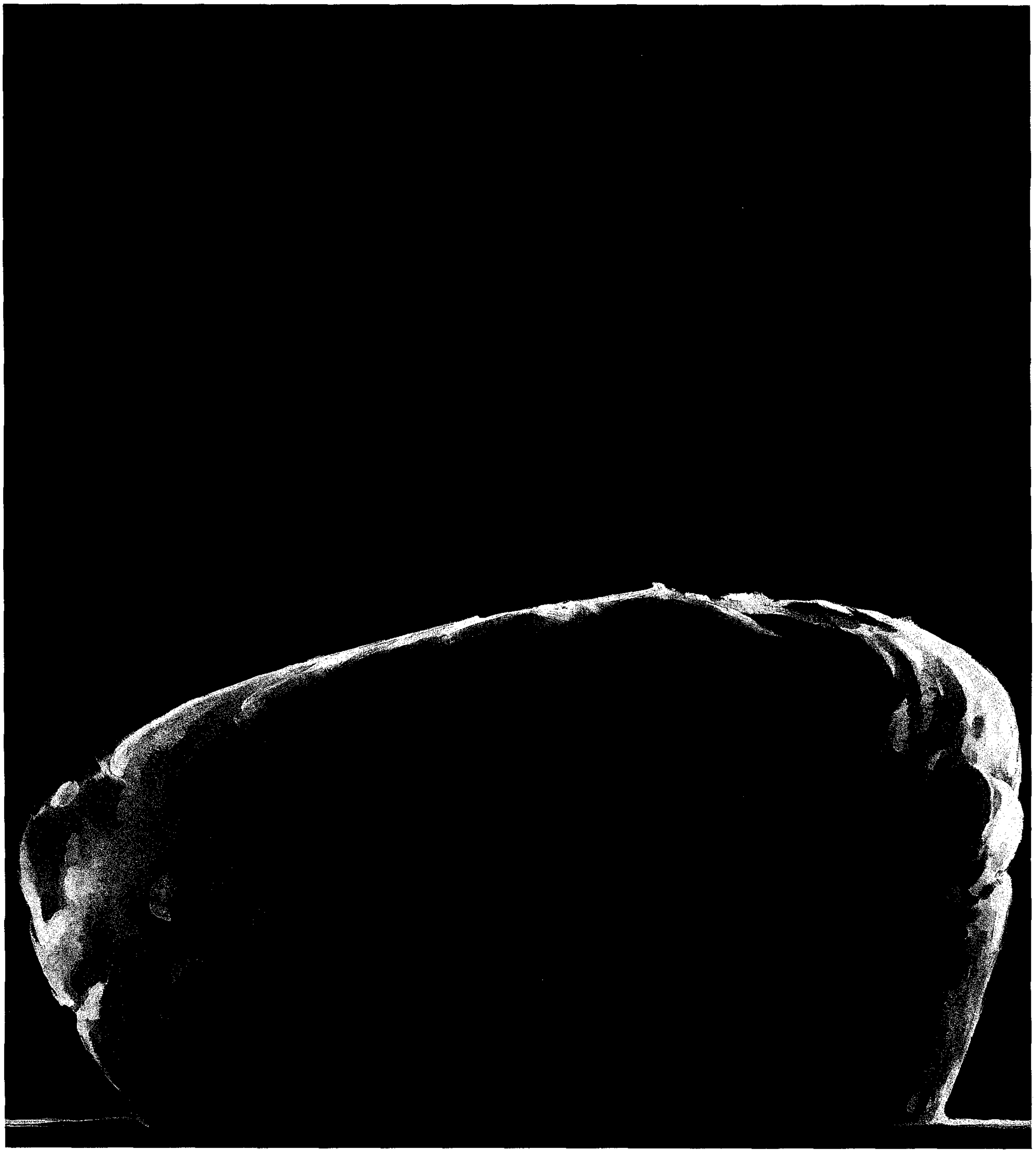


Appliquéd floor-length coat by Viktor & Rolf in a silk-and-cotton patchwork, with three-dimensional silk flowers and ribbons.

FICTION

WES AMERIGO'S GIANT FEAR

BY DAVID SCHICKLER



Wes awoke suddenly in his bed. He did not hurt anywhere or need water. His wife, Helen, sighed and twitched beside him, as she had for sixteen years. He looked out the window and saw snow mounting on his lawn. The clock glowed midnight, an hour Wes rarely saw. Somehow he felt an emergency at hand. An unfamiliar dread filled his mind and lungs, a feeling that he hadn't awoken by accident but been summoned like a minuteman to a war just taking shape.

He stared at his wife, at the blades of her shoulders, the naked ladder of her spine. She slept without clothes always, a beautiful, strange accomplice. He wished, for the millionth time in their marriage, that she were a mystical being, that she could sense his concerns even in sleep and rise to solve them. But her head stayed down and facing away from him on the pillow.

Wes got up. He was wearing only boxer shorts, but he didn't reach for his robe. He didn't want a robe, or warm milk. He wanted to dispose of his dread.

He walked out to the landing and gazed down at the living room. Lady Macbeth, his younger daughter's Irish wolfhound, was sprawled before the fireplace, in which some embers still glowed. Over the mantel hung a painting composed of black swirls, which Helen had bought in Paris during their honeymoon. The dog, the fire, and the art looked, as they always did to Wes, eerie and good together. They combined to form some meaning in Wes's life, though he couldn't have said what that meaning was. But as the wolfhound slept and the embers winked, the dread inside Wes grew. He went to check on his children.

They were alive, of course, and asleep in their beds. Michael, fourteen, lay with his fists clenched at his sides, his body fighting puberty even in sleep. Michael had acne, a knife collection, and a love of brutal honesty. His archenemy, Anna, was twelve. Posters of Alvin Ailey covered the walls of her room, and her modern-dance teacher had told Wes that his daughter's body could perform the incredible. The last room upstairs belonged to Pill, who was seven and very small, and who loved to pray. Pill had a more dignified name on her birth certificate, but everyone had more or less forgotten it. It wasn't clear to whom Pill prayed, because she never addressed any gods by name, and Wes and Helen weren't religious. But they often found their daughter kneeling in some corner, with her eyes closed. When asked about her prayers, Pill would laugh, but her laugh was light, and Helen knew enough not to try to dissect it.

Wes worried more. He feared that Pill would become a nun. In fact, Wes had a whole category of fears reserved for his family, and as he stood shivering in the hallway, he reviewed them. He feared that Michael would stab himself or others. He feared that Anna would move to New York City and become a talented, emaciated lesbian. Chiefly, though, Wes feared the collapse of his and Helen's catering business, which was on the brink of bankruptcy. Just last month, Wes had been forced to take out a third mortgage on the house, and financial woes circled in his skull every day like sharp-winged black dragons.

Still, Wes's dread this night somehow surpassed these anxieties. His fear wasn't limited to one child, one house. It was a vast, treacherous feeling, the kind of fear that tugs like a tar pit at one man's heart yet threatens to suck down the whole human race. A therapist might've diagnosed Wes as depressed. A cleric might've guessed that he lacked faith in God and humanity. But, standing half naked in his home, Wes didn't call on outside forces for help. He put on a T-shirt and woke his family.

"Is the house on fire?" Michael asked. "Did someone croak?"

Anna yawned. "Who croaked?"

Wes had assembled his wife and children in the living room. He fed logs into the hearth to re-start the fire. Lady Macbeth paced around the room, confused and alert. Helen sat on the couch in her bulky white bathrobe. Pill sat on Helen's lap. Michael and Anna were on the floor. It was twelve-thirty.

Wes faced his family. "Something's wrong," he announced. "Something's missing."

"Money?" Michael asked. "Stock options? The family nest egg?"

On several occasions lately, Michael had overheard Wes on the phone with Cecil Harkness, the mortgage-and-loan officer for Second Mountain Mutual Bank. Cecil had also been Helen's sweetheart back at Second Mountain High School. He'd been a senior when Wes and Helen were sophomores.

"Did someone break in?" Michael sounded hopeful. "Is there a perp?"

Wes shook his head.

"Oh, God," Helen whispered. "The van?"

The family van, an enormous Chevy with a refrigerated rear, was Wes and Helen's livelihood. That night, it held eight thousand dollars' worth of sirloin tips and Baked Alaska for the Nelson retirement party, the next afternoon. But Wes had bolted the garage door at ten, and Lady Macbeth would howl Armageddon if she heard it unbolt.

"No," Wes said. "What I mean is, I feel funny."

"Are you shrooming?" Michael asked.

Anna tugged her mother's foot. "What's shrooming?"

"*Shroom*." Pill made engine noises. "*Shroom, shroom*."

"I feel—" Wes began, then stopped. The firewood crackled.

Pill giggled.

Wes cleared his throat. "I feel afraid."

Helen wrapped a quilt around herself and Pill. She understood that there was no burglar or gas leak in the house. In the face of such threats, her husband moved like the chef he was. His hands held tools and he made decisions. It was emotions, Helen knew, that challenged Wes, that made him stammer.

"What are you afraid of?" Anna asked. "Did you have a nightmare?"

"Anna has nightmares," Michael said.

"Shut up," Anna said.

"About Mr. Pants," Michael said.

"Shut up."

"Mr. Pants, Mr. Pants."

Anna elbowed Michael's ribs. He punched her thigh.

"Kids," Helen warned.

It was common knowledge that Anna's dreams were haunted by a disembodied pair of trousers she called Mr. Pants. She had been traumatized by a scene in "Bedknobs and Broomsticks" where clothes flew around, tormenting the children. Ever since then, Mr. Pants had lurked in her subconscious, chasing her, threatening to wrap his legs around her. In her waking life,

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Anna was suspicious of clothing. Restrictive adult gear like bras and neckties petrified her.

"Are you having a breakdown?" Michael asked.

Lady Macbeth offered Wes her paw. He took it, staring at the tuft of red fur between her toes, an anomaly in her otherwise black coat. He remembered some advice of his mother's. In a crisis, she'd said, remind yourself of what is true.

"I'm thirty-nine," Wes said, still holding the dog's paw. "I'm a chef. I have a wife and three children and a dog. We live on Second Mountain in the Adirondacks."

Helen and the children waited.

"My parents are dead. The earth revolves around the sun."

"Wes," Helen said.

"Two plus two is four. We had meat loaf for dinner. I've never been to Wales."

"Wes, for God's sake."

Wes knew how he sounded, but he went on, blurting out the truth, about baseball, potatoes au gratin, the aurora borealis, searching for the one thing that would quell his anxiety.

Anna whimpered, "Stop it, Daddy."

Michael said, "Paging Carl Jung."

Lady Macbeth began yowling.

It was only when Wes's voice rose to a brimstone roar that Pill crawled from her mother's lap and climbed onto Lady Macbeth's back. The dog wasn't surprised, for she loved Pill as a horse loves its master. Pill was so small that Lady Macbeth had no trouble carrying her, and the girl often straddled the wolfhound's back, riding around the house or the neighborhood.

Tonight, though, Pill boosted herself onto the dog's back and stood at her full height, eye to eye with Wes. She placed two fingers over her father's mouth, quieting his tirade.

"Don't worry," she said.

The next night, a Thursday, it happened again. Wes bolted awake at midnight, a chill under his skin.

"Stress," Helen whispered. "Work-induced."

But the Nelson party had gone all right. And two hundred swordfish steaks for the Harkness-Ives wedding reception would arrive in the morning from Hyannis.

"Insomnia." Helen scratched her husband's chest, which always made him sleepy.

Wes had announced the night before that something was missing, but now he felt the missing thing coming, rushing toward him.

"Jesus Christ," Michael said, yawning.

"Don't swear," Helen said.

"Jesus Christmas," Michael said. He and Anna were on the couch, on opposite sides of a Scrabble board.

It was one-thirty. Wes had once again gathered his family. Helen was curled in the BarcaLounger, reading "Wuthering Heights." She'd selected something charged, something creepy, because it fit the mood that her husband had created in the house. She watched him at the kitchen counter, chopping chocolate, making truffle cakes for the Harkness-Ives reception.

Michael arranged letters on the Scrabble board. Anna read them.

" 'Chubber'?" Anna said.

"It's British," Michael said, "like bloke. It means a fat guy. I get twenty points."

Anna frowned. "If 'chubber' is a word, use it in a sentence."

Michael said, "That bloke is a chubber."

"Mom!" Anna said.

"Enough." Helen snapped her book shut. "That's enough from both of you." Tonight, Helen was as edgy as her husband. She'd fielded three separate calls that day from Cecil Harkness. Cecil's eldest child, Tymalyn, would be the bride at the reception the Amerigos were catering that Saturday night, and for the past month Cecil had been calling Helen at least once a week to tweak the menu and flirt like a monarch.

"The cocktail sauce," Cecil had said that morning, "should have just a whisper of horseradish, Moxie."

Moxie had been his nickname for Helen when they'd dated, twenty-one years ago.

"Uh-huh," Helen had said.

"Mind you, just a suggestion, Moxie. Just a dalliance. My JuJu's stomach can't handle anything wild."

Helen had closed her eyes, pictured Cecil's wife, Juliana Harkness, who ran marathons, held charity balls.

"We won't serve anything wild," Helen had promised.

She stared now at the cover of "Wuthering Heights." She was thirty-eight, she'd never been on a windy moor, and two of her children were throwing Scrabble tiles at each other. The third was riding a giant wolfhound into the kitchen.

Pill steered Lady Macbeth up to Wes. "Lady wants a taste," she said.

Wes dolloped some truffle on the dog's nose. Lady Macbeth licked half of it off. Pill dipped her thumb in the rest and put the thumb in her mouth.

"That's unsanitary," Wes said.

Pill squinted. "This needs Sheeno sauce."

According to Pill, all food tasted best when drenched in maraschino-cherry juice, which Wes kept in a vat in the pantry.

"Duly noted," Wes said, but he frowned. His daughter always looked too serious, with her rigid black bangs and skin like a winter moon. Her eyes, black as her hair, made Wes nervous. They focussed too intently on people.

"Don't worry," Pill said. "Lady and I will make something tomorrow."

Wes petted Pill's hair. At least, he thought, she's wearing Snoopy pajamas, as a seven-year-old should.

On Friday night, Helen made love to her husband. She worked her limbs around his body like a spell. When he dropped into sleep, she was sure he'd stay there till morning and wake relaxed and ready for the reception.

Wes dreamed of lightning. The Amerigos' house, built near the rocky pinnacle of Second Mountain, suffered the whims of the sky, and Wes had recurring nightmares of tornadoes tearing his home to pieces. There was no carnage in his vision tonight, though. Some spectral lightning did strike his house, but instead of consuming his family and their rooms, it suffused the house with a glow so tangible that Wes wondered whether, if he opened his mouth, some of the light might land and melt on his tongue. He followed the glow to its blinding epicenter: his kitchen.

Wes woke up shaking. It was two in the morning. "Come on," he told Helen.

In the kitchen, they found Pill kneeling on Lady Macbeth's back, kneading dough on the counter. The girl and the dog were covered with so much flour that when they moved squalls of powder rose. All the baking pans and cake molds were stacked across the counter and the floor, each filled with pale, uncooked dough.

"Pill?" Wes said. "Honey?"

The little girl spread her arms like a hostess. "Look," she said. "See."

"I see a mess," Helen said.

Flour lay in drifts on every surface. Sugar and salt crystals glittered in Pill's hair. Spices—curry and cloves and who knew what else—were gathered in piles.

"Bread?" Wes said. "You're making bread?"

Pill shook her head.

Helen knelt, poked at the trays. "It looks like bread."

Anna and Michael appeared in the doorway.

Michael raised his eyebrows. "Did something explode?"

Anna prodded a tray with her foot. "What's all this food for?"

"Eating," Pill said.

"There's forty pans here," Anna announced. "Pill used forty pans."

"Helen," Wes said, "please take Michael and Anna into the other room."

Michael scowled, narrowed his eyes. "Is Pill dead meat?"

"What is that stuff?" Anna said.

Helen scuttled her older children out as Wes plucked Pill off Lady Macbeth. He sat at the table, his daughter on his lap.

"Send Lady out, please," he said.

Pill nodded, and the wolfhound vanished.

"So." Wes felt the queer tingle in his limbs that always came when he held Pill. It was a current that lashed out at a different target in Wes each time, sharpening his vision, untangling his thoughts about work or money. He never mentioned this phenomenon to Pill, or even Helen, because while it thrilled him, it also frightened him. When Pill played with other children, Wes felt relieved not to have sired a hermit. But he watched her, fearing the day that some neighbor would sound the alarm. *Amerigo's daughter touched my kid. Pill Amerigo zapped my kid.*

"Pill," Wes said, "who's all this food for? Why'd you make it?"

Pill was perched lightly on Wes's thigh, like a bird. She blinked at her father.

"Daddy's afraid."

Wes stroked her hair. "What am I afraid of?" he whispered in her ear.

Pill giggled. "Fraidy cat."

The tingling sensation had chosen Wes's nose tonight. An ambush of smells came to him: wolfhound hair, Pill's honey shampoo, Freon from the icebox, oregano, ginger. These should have been mundane scents to Wes, the stuff of his days, but now they powered through him the way they might through a blind and deaf person. He gripped Pill's floured hand.

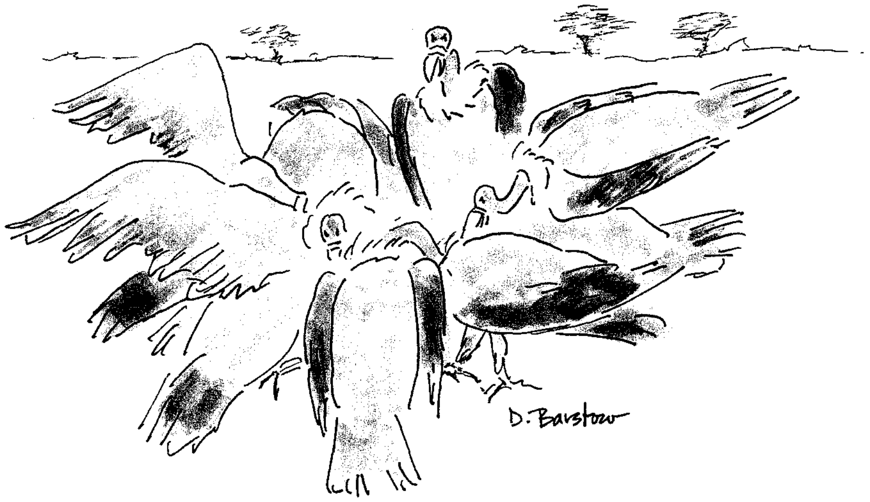
"What're you doing?" he demanded. "What's happening?"

Pill didn't giggle now. She squeezed Wes's hand. "You'll see," she said.

When the Amerigos catered at the Second Mountain Party Lodge, Wes cooked and Helen, Michael, and Anna served. Wes counted on this arrangement to charm up repeat business for the family. Women smiled at Michael as he poured Chardonnay, sullen and cute in his tuxedo. A single wink from a man would fluster Anna enough that she'd drop croissants and sprint for the bathroom. Pill was too small to carry trays, so she stayed in the kitchen. For a year or two, Wes had given her finishing duties—sprinkling parsley on potatoes, flaking Heath bars over ice cream. Then, one evening when Pill was six, a drunken guest had blundered into the kitchen, shouting that his wife had puked up her clams casino and where was the goddam chef. Wes was out in the van, so the first person the drunkard saw was Pill. He bent his florid face to hers.

"Who makes the clams?" bellowed the man. "Who makes the clams?"

Pill was paralyzed by the man's noise, the beating blue vein in his temple. He snorted and stamped at her until a friend came in and yanked him back to the party. After that night, Pill had announced that her job was family security, and at all functions thereafter she rode Lady Macbeth around the kitchen's perimeter. Anyone who barged in met a frowning wolfhound and her black-eyed jockey and usually barged right back out. If the person needed coaxing, Pill started shouting "Who makes the



"Hey, it's my turn to keep the Ray-Bans!"

• •

clams?," which she'd adopted as her battle cry.

The Harkness-Ives reception was a do-or-die night for Wes's business. Both families were wealthy, and the guest list featured the plumpest wallets on Second Mountain. Plus, it was February, the time when all May-to-October brides- and grooms-to-be were choosing their caterers. Those couples would dine on Wes's Swordfish Cilantro tonight, and if they weren't pleased—if Wes didn't lock up at least twenty gigs for the summer—then Amerigo Catering would be insolvent by tax time.

"Where are Pill and Lady?" Helen asked. She was in the Party Lodge kitchen, fixing Anna's hem, cleaning lint off Michael's lapels. On catering nights, Pill wore black dungarees and a black T-shirt, like a concert roadie.

"Van," Anna said.

Wes blew in from the pantry, where he'd been shelling a thousand shrimp. "Tables watered, Anna?"

"Yes, sir."

"Rolled and buttered, Michael?"

"Roger. Wilco."

The double doors from the dining room flapped open. Cecil and Juliana Harkness swept into the kitchen like Kennedys, all smiles and tailored dark raiments.

Helen stared at Juliana's fingertips, which looked exquisitely, almost surgically, lacquered. Wes tried to smile at Cecil, the boy wonder of Second Mountain High, 1981. Back then, Cecil had won prizes in both oratory and the long jump. Now he and JuJu funded Eritrean soccer camps.

"We're the first to arrive from the church." Cecil took a deep breath, put his hand to his chest, as if crucial things were happening inside him. "Wes. Moxie. Our Tym has become a wife."

"What's Moxie?" Anna asked.

Juliana asked if everything was in order.

"Absolutely," Wes assured her. "You're in for a feast."

Michael tapped Cecil's shoulder. "Sir? In yesteryear, didn't you and my mom make the beast with two backs?"

Wes's face crumpled. Helen turned scarlet. Cecil crossed his meaty forearms.

"Well," Juliana said. She bit back a laugh.

"Michael Amerigo." Helen pinched her son's ear, tugged him toward the pantry.

"It was just a question," Michael said, grimacing. "A Shakespearean question."

Juliana smiled softly at Wes. She touched his sleeve, rolled her eyes. "Children," she said sympathetically.

When Wes eventually went to check on Pill, he found her sitting in the van. She had one arm around Lady Macbeth and one around the maraschino-juice vat, which Wes didn't remember packing.

"Here you are," he said. "Come on, honey. Time to cook the steaks."

"The steaks are finished." Pill pointed at the fridge bin. "Lady and I did finishing duty."

Lady Macbeth smiled at Wes, red ooze dripping from her teeth.

"Look," Pill commanded.

Wes frowned, opened the bin. Icy smoke billowed. Inside, two hundred swordfish steaks and two hundred truffle cakes were drowned in sweet, sticky blood.

"They needed Sheeno sauce," Pill said.

"Oh, God." Wes grabbed a steak, rubbed it desperately with his thumbs. Even when the juice drained off, the fish was stained deep red.

"It was Lady's idea," Pill said. The wolfhound barked.

"Oh, my God." Wes dropped the swordfish, rescued a truffle, still afloat in its foil dinghy. "Pill." He turned on his daughter. His jaws locked. "Pill. Why did— Honey, Jesus. These dinners cost thousands. They're ruined. I'm ruined."

"Lady and I shared a truffle, Daddy. It was good."

Wes knelt down opposite his daughter. Her face looked as calm as it had the day she'd come out of Helen, the day the doctor slapped her and the sound Pill made was more a laugh than a cry. Now she had cherry stains on her mouth and white truffle-cake icing on her black T-shirt.

"I can't believe this." Wes flopped down onto the floor of the van, his head in his hands. He took deep breaths. The dread in his heart leaped, flipped, stuck a landing. "Damn it. God damn it, Pill."

Pill crawled into her father's lap. "Don't worry."

Wes felt action in his jaw again. He clenched and unclenched his fists. "Not everyone likes Sheeno sauce, Pill."

"I like it," Pill explained.

"What you did was wrong. Now I've got nothing to feed those people."

Pill giggled. "Yes, you do. Look."

The van was the size of a milk truck. Shelves lined both walls, and Pill and Wes sat in the aisle in the center. The shelves were deep enough to hold multiple trays. Pill was pointing at the middle tier of shelves, which Wes hadn't filled for this occasion.

"There's nothing up there, Pill."

Pill stamped her foot. "Look, look, look."

Wes sighed, got up, looked.

"See," Pill said.

The shelves were filled with the forty pans Pill had prepared the night before.

"How'd these get here?" Wes said.

"Cook them," Pill said. "Serve them."

Wes snorted. "As an entrée? Bread?"

Pill took her father's hand. "Serve them, Daddy."

Without warning, Wes felt a new voltage in his mind, a switch in his instincts. It was no lobotomy of reason. He just accepted the fact that Pill had coördinated his doom. He shrugged, blinked, a man with no options. He looked at the pans before him. Well, now, he thought.

"This is crazy," Helen said twenty minutes later in the Lodge kitchen. Wes was loading the pans Pill had prepared into ovens, turning dials. Michael and Anna peeked in from the pantry, while Pill, on Lady Macbeth, stood at Wes's side.

"Make the ovens all the way hot," Pill told her father. "Like a trillion degrees."

Helen gripped Wes's arm. "We can wash the steaks."

"They're ruined, Helen." Wes shut the oven doors. He looked at his impossible daughter on her impossible dog.

"Wes." Helen used her careful voice. "We are not doing this. Those people out there—"

"I'm sorry, Moxie." Wes set his teeth, watched the pans through the ovens' glass windows. "But if this can keep a certain someone from repossessing my home and my wife—"

"No one's repossessing me."

"Are you sure?"

Helen crossed her arms. Wes wiped his sweating brow.

In the pantry doorway, Anna was crying. "What's happening?"

Michael put his arm around her shoulders, squeezed. "Pill is dissolving our family unit."

"Holy mackerel." Wes was still staring through the oven windows. He grabbed his wife's elbow. "Helen. Look."

Sitting at the head table in the dining room, Tymalyn Ives, née Harkness, was a high-strung eighteen-year-old bride. She blamed this on her parents, who'd given her a name with a tomboy diminutive. When Tym was a girl, kids had teased her about her name, and the teasing had plagued her all through high school. By the summer after senior year, this abuse had lowered her self-esteem, which had caused her to drink too many Mickey's Big Mouths one night last July, which resulted in a D.W.I. conviction, which made Tym cry and cling to her boyfriend, Jonathan Ives, which caused her to get pregnant, which caused her to get married. To make matters worse, the Iveses, who were Episcopalian, were unhappy with Tym's choice of Bobby Monkey's House of Funky as the disk jockey. Plus, Tym had a pimple on her chin and a twenty-four-hour crush on Kyle from Downstate, Jonathan's best man, and all Tym wanted now, the only thing that could save her wedding, was the arrival of the main course, her absolutely favorite food: swordfish.

"Jonathan." Tym grabbed her husband's wrist. "Jonny. What is that?"

"What's what?"

"That. On that plate. On all the plates."

The P.A. system crackled. "Folks," the d.j. said. "I, Bobby Monkey, will now lead you in prayer." He whinnied like a drug addict. His real last name was Monkieski.

"It looks like bread. Muffins." Jonathan massaged his wife's knee under the table. "I'm feeling very matrimonial," he whispered.

"We already had bread," Tym said. "And shrimp." Her eyes followed the trays that Helen, Michael, and Anna were carrying to each table.

"Yum, yum, yum," Bobby Monkey chanted, "munch, munch, munch. Thank you for the Cap'n Crunch."

Jonathan informed his wife that their honeymoon suite had a mammoth water bed.

"Jonny, shut up, shut up. Something's wrong here. Something's fucked up."

Pill's food did look like bread. It had risen in whatever container held it, fluffing and browning, and none of it had scorched. Despite its consistent color and texture, each batch was different. Some pillowed out of their containers like clouds. Others had sculpted themselves into the shapes of temples or mountains or even eagles, lions, and whales. Helen, Michael, and Anna carved these shapes, set a piece before each guest.

The guests laughed. They sensed a ruse, looked to the head table. But the bride had tears in her eyes, and, as the hall quieted, she let out a shriek. Every-

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one froze. In the kitchen, Wes shivered.

Over and out, he thought.

Cecil Harkness stood, hands on hips. "Amerigo!" he bellowed. "Get out here!"

Wes peeked through the double doors just as Tym swallowed her first bite.

"Hey." Tym's face softened. "Hey."

She took more bites, and so did her guests. What followed reminded Wes of his youth, at Camp Schlappi, where he and a dozen other boys would line up holding hands beside an electric cow fence. The lead boy would close his fist around the barbed wire, and a pulse would shoot down to the last boy, convulsing each body along the way. The pulse smarted your nerves and heart, but your muscles locked onto it so tightly that unless you tore yourself from the vine of boys you'd stay there, twitching with invisible juice, maybe till you died.

The wedding guests weren't convulsing, but a current was running around the room. All the people, even the children, were chewing their food with shocked expressions, swallowing and beaming and having some more.

Lady Macbeth, bearing her mistress, nudged Wes from behind.

"Let us see," Pill said.

Wes opened the double doors. The rest of the Amerigos came over.

Anna nodded at the guests. "What's wrong with them?"

"Pill drugged them," Michael said.

"Did not," Pill said.

"Pill slipped them a mickey."

"What's a mickey?" Anna asked.

"A sedative," Michael explained. "A punk-ass downer."

Helen put her arms around her children, corralling their conversation. Together they watched the gorging guests, who were tearing down the temples and animals, cramming the food into their mouths.

Wes touched his wife's wrist. "Helen. Bring us a fresh pan, please."

Helen did. She brought out a warm loaf shaped like a swallow, and the Amerigos ate.

Wes's tongue ignited with the first bite. The food was every taste he'd ever known—apples, marijuana, saffron, tequila—and every memory he married to those tastes. He detected the flavors of childhood colas, of a rabbit, cooked medium, that he and Helen had savored in Paris, of the fried eggs he'd stared at the day his mother died. Webbing all these together was something delicious and beyond Wes's vocabulary.

The other Amerigos, though they ate from the same loaf, had different sensations. Helen tasted brandy on her tongue, and a future of kisses, kisses that Wes hadn't shared with her yet. Anna tasted the sweat that slipped over her lips when she danced. Michael smelled the peppermint schnapps he'd choked down the week before with Marvis and Charlie Bunt.

It was the mystery, though, the unnamed element of Pill's food, that dynamized all alike. This element, like a radical atom, danced across the teeth of everyone in the room. It planted itself in their stomachs, bloomed in their minds.

As Wes took this force in, digested it, he had an odd thought. His thought was that the world was a hungry swirl. The world was a mixture of cinnamon and wind and fire and lime and bone, and people needed to feed on these elements to endure life among them. But people also needed a spice, an ecstasy. Somehow, both substance and rapture were ingredients in Pill's food.

Kyle from Downstate stood on his chair, held up his plate. "This stuff kicks ass," he yelled.

This broke the room's trance. Other people shouted, waved their food.

"Tym, what is this?"

"Who cooked this?"

"It's marzipan," an Italian woman squawked. "Right?"

Harold Ives, the father of the groom, lifted his table's pan. "Ours," he said solemnly, "is an armadillo."

"It's a tortoise," Pamela Ives said.

"It's marzipan, damn it."

"I taste dill," a bridesmaid said.

Cecil Harkness licked his lips as he ate. He looked unspeakably pleased. "I'm getting some raw-oyster action here, JuJu. Or ground rhino horn."

Bobby Monkey cackled over the microphone. "Magic beans, people. Magic beans."

"Find the chef!" the groom called.

"To the kitchen!" the bride said.

"To the kitchen!" the crowd chanted.

Like a horde, they rose to their feet and surged toward the Amerigos, wearing dangerous smiles. Lady started barking.

"Everyone back," Wes said.

As the crowd reached the kitchen doorway, the Amerigos moved back to the pantry, all except Pill. The wedding guests stopped abruptly at the sight of the little girl astride the giant, growling wolfhound.

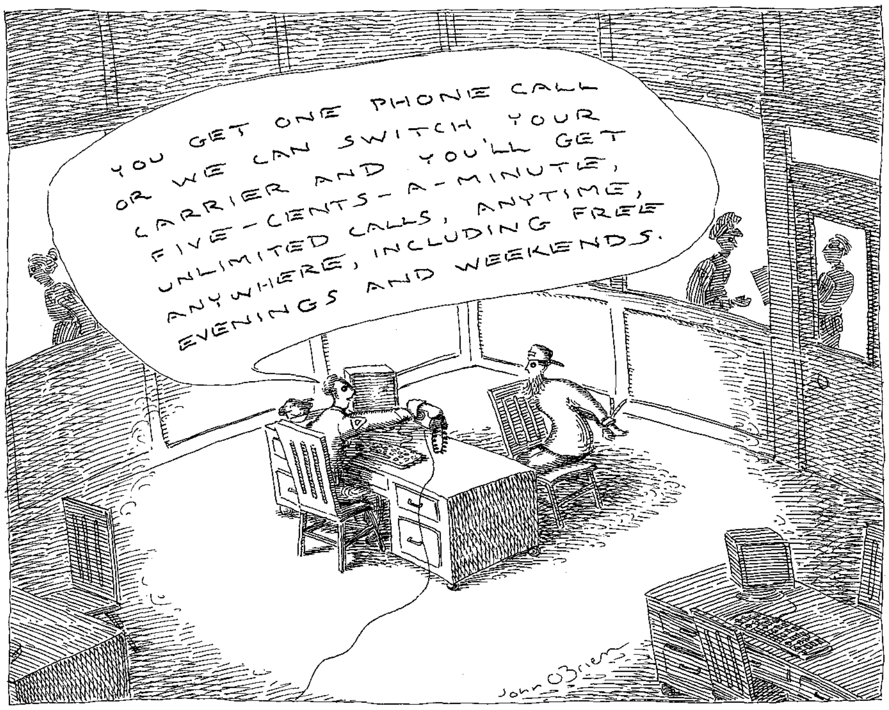
"Hello," Pill said.

"Where's the chef?" the crowd said, panting.

Pill waved at the faces. "I'm Pill. I'm seven. This is Lady Macbeth."

"Pill," Helen said, "come away from there."

"Is he the chef?" Tym pointed at Wes.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"We're both the chefs," Pill said.

"Pill's creating a diversion." Michael held a paring knife against his thigh. "To the van!"

Wes nodded. "Michael's right. Let's go."

Jonathan Ives blinked down at Pill. "You're the chef?"

"Well," Pill admitted, "I ruined the truffles."

The Amerigos moved to the loading bay, which opened flush onto the van's back door.

"Wes," Helen said, "we can't leave Pill."

Wes looked back at his daughter, who was holding her hand up to the crowd. He saw that Pill had become the fulcrum of something immense.

"She's coming," Wes promised.

Michael clapped Helen's shoulder. "Pill's got our backs."

"Michael's got a knife," Anna said.

"They're getting away," JuJu Harkness said.

"Don't let them go!" Tym cried.

Pamela Ives said, "Get the recipe."

Tym shoved past everyone, and confronted Pill. Lady Macbeth bared her fangs.

"Back, Lady," Pill ordered.

Both the dog and the bride took this as a command. Tym stopped shoving. Lady Macbeth retreated toward the loading bay. With each step the wolfhound took, the crowd advanced. Many had lost their smiles.

"Please," Tym begged, "the recipe."

"The recipe," Cecil Harkness said.

"The recipe!" the crowd demanded.

"Who makes the clams?" Pill shouted. "Who makes the clams?"

The crowd quieted. "What?" they murmured. "What'd she say?"

The van roared.

"Good night, everybody." Pill hugged her wolfhound's neck. "Home, Lady."

Lady Macbeth spun, reared like a steed, sprinted for the van. The crowd gave chase. At the bay door, Lady Macbeth launched into the van, landing on the fridge bin. Wes gunned the engine. The van raced off, with Pill still saddled on her dog, waving back at the throng.

The next morning, as snow fell gently on Second Mountain, the Amerigos were at home, awake, in their kitchen. Pill sat calmly beside Lady Macbeth on the floor, where they were each having a bowl of oatmeal with Sheeno sauce. Wes, Helen, Michael, and Anna sat at the breakfast table, staring down at Pill, wondering what to say. A batch of Wes's blueberry muffins stood untouched on a plate.

"I—" Wes cleared his throat. "I guess we all experienced something of a—" He looked at Helen, and they both blushed. The night before, they'd shared a last piece of Pill's food in bed. Then, on some wonderful, chaotic impulse, Wes had performed with Helen for the first time since college a sexual move they'd once dubbed Cramming for Exams.

A knock sounded on the kitchen door. When Wes opened it, Barter Kincaid, features reporter for the Second Mountain *Minute,* snapped Wes's picture. Around Barter's neck were a pad and pen on a cord. "Your family's famous, Wes. Any comment?"

"No," Wes said.

Barter thrust his chin toward Pill. "Word is your daughter there served up some serious mojo last night, over to the Lodge. Heroin cakes. Acid bagels. Something."

"They're not cakes," Pill said. "They're Pills. Like me."

"Pills. Huh. Cute angle." Barter jotted in his notepad. He held his pen like a scalpel. "Anything else?"

Lady Macbeth growled.

"Our family doesn't cook with heroin," Helen said. "Or acid."

"Goodbye." Wes shut the door and returned to the table.

"Will Pill be incarcerated?" Michael asked.

Anna bit her lip. "Is Pill sick?"

Wes scooped Pill off the floor, into his lap. "Pill's staying right here. She's fine. She's just special, that's all."

"She's gifted," Helen said.

"Am I gifted?" Anna asked.

Helen nodded. "Of course, honey. So is Michael."

"How?"

"Well, you have your dancing. And Michael has . . . comic timing."

"What the hell is that?" Michael demanded.

"Don't swear. It means you say funny things at the right times."

"How's Pill gifted?" Anna asked.

Helen looked at Wes. Sixteen years before, he'd proposed to her while they

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were driving on the highway, arguing about burial versus cremation. It had happened at 12:31 A.M. Eastern Standard Time. Helen had said, "Maybe," as a tease, and then they'd kept arguing, Wes defending burial, which Helen had never believed in. When he said that he wanted to be buried not beside Helen but in the same coffin with her, ribs to ribs with her forever, Helen had said yes.

"Do you know what your soul is?" Helen asked her children.

"The part of you that floats." Michael was chewing a muffin.

"Well," Helen said, "I think Pill was born with an extra-strength soul. That's her gift."

"But what was in those things Pill made?" Anna asked. "I mean, where'd she get the recipe?"

Wes turned Pill around to face him. "Pill, honey. Answer your sister. Where'd you get the recipe?"

Pill yawned, stretched her arms. "From the part of me that floats," she said.

At noon, Pill saddled herself on Lady Macbeth. "Lady wants a look around," she told her father.

Wes frowned. Pill did this most Sundays, rode Lady Macbeth into town. She and the wolfhound cantered through Switchwood Park, bought licorice at Captain Hardware. Wes usually let Pill take these trips alone, because he suspected that they had to do with her prayers, her solitude. Also, Second Mountain was a small town, and even if it weren't, given Lady Macbeth's fangs, no one would ever trouble Pill. On the other hand, Wes thought, Pill had never jazzed up the populace as she had last night.

"I'm coming, too," he announced.

The girl, her father, and her dog went to town. They ambled past the Main Street stores of Wes's youth: Digby Sundries, the Happy Belly Deli, Topper's Gym & Spa. As they walked, the denizens of Second Mountain appeared and accosted Pill.

"Pill," Sharkey Meager said. "Pill, revive my nose." Sharkey had woken up unable to smell on New Year's Day, 1987, and he'd tasted nothing since.

Pill frowned. "I don't know about noses," she told Sharkey. "But if you want a Pill, come by our house later—77 Triphammer Lane."

After Sharkey came Preston Fort, who couldn't stomach dairy, and Wendy Bunt, who couldn't bear children. Young Trisha Sibley, the wretched bassoonist, waved shyly at Pill from the porch of Digby Sundries, while Andrew Wallace Wix, head chef at the Otter Inn, challenged Pill to a bake-off. Roy Kincannon, bloated and lonely, begged for something slimming.

Pill told them all that they could come by the house if they wanted.

Wes stopped Lady Macbeth on the sidewalk. He leaned down, peered into his daughter's unknowable black eyes. "Pill."

"Yes, Daddy?"

Wes inhaled and exhaled, not sure what to ask.

"Pill, will those people . . ." Wes watched his breath make ghosts in the air. He remembered doing this as a child, wondering why the ghosts never stayed. "If those people eat what you make them, will they . . . get what they want?"

Pill shrugged.

"Hey," a voice said. "Girl."

Wes looked around. He and Pill and Lady Macbeth were in front of the Masterpiece Pub. Hunched in a snowdrift beside the Masterpiece was Nox Vandermalley, dressed in garbage bags.

"Hey, girl," Nox said.

Wes cleared his throat nervously. "Come on, Pill. Let's keep going."

Nox Vandermalley had been born in Second Mountain with a dead eye, an empty black hole in his face, and he had no living family. If Nox had had a wandering or lazy eye, or the decency to patch over his darkness, the town might have understood, given Nox work or a wife. As it was, Nox was a drifter, bone thin and stubborn, and he lived in an old coyote den, in Switchwood Forest. He prowled into town on occasion, but if you passed him an idle good word it just got sucked into his dead eye like driftwood into a whirlpool.

Lady Macbeth growled.

"Hold, Lady," Pill said. She remained on the wolfhound, just five feet from Nox.

"What you want with me, girl?"

"I'm Pill," Pill said. "I'm seven. This is Lady Macbeth."

Nox grabbed his rump with both hands. "Yeah? Well, these are my buttocks."

"All right, Pill." Wes put his hand to his daughter's shoulder. "Let's go."

"If you want to," Pill told Nox, "stop by the house later—77 Triphammer Lane."

Wes leaned his head close to Pill's. "No, baby," he whispered. "I'm sorry. This man can't come."

Pill turned to her father, and kissed him once, hard, on the lips. "Yes, he can, Daddy."

Wes stood still. His daughter's kiss kindled in his mouth. It poured down his throat like tea, filled his heart.

"Wow," Wes said. He stared at the snow falling around him, the town he'd spent his life in. Before him was the Masterpiece, the pub where he'd first been punched. Half a mile away was Harkness Cemetery, where he and his wife had a plot. And inside him was his daughter's kiss, telling him the truth. It was telling him that, Pills or no Pills, Eritreans might starve, and Michael would remain a wise-ass, and Nox would stay half blind and surly, and births and wars and kindnesses would stake their claims on earth.

"Wow." Wes laughed out loud. He stretched his neck, turned his hips. Some constriction inside him, some icicle that had been living in his spine, was gone.

"Hey. You two. I'm still here." Nox, covered in slush, glared at the Amerigos.

"See you tonight," Pill told the man. She spurred her heels gently into Lady's flanks, and the Amerigos started off.

"I'm still holding my buttocks," Nox hollered.

By evening, most of the Harkness-Ives wedding guests and at least another hundred people were queued up on the Amerigos' lawn and down Triphammer Lane. Sharkey was there, and Preston, and Roy Kincannon, and a ragged figure in garbage bags. Despite the snow, the local scoutmaster, Robert Sibley, had set up tents, and inside these tents adults sat around glowing space heaters while children played games. Like soup-kitchen patrons or concertgoers, the crowd was prepared to endure.

Through the Amerigos' kitchen window, those on the lawn could see Pill, engaged in a flurry of activity. Flour was tossed in the air, pots and pans clanged together, and a large animal barked now and then from inside the white cloud.

Because Pill had requested privacy, the other Amerigos were out on the lawn, too. Michael was in the back yard, trying his first joint with the Bunt brothers, while Anna, in a lavender snowsuit, weaved among the tents, dancing for anyone who would watch. Jonny and Tymalyn Ives were telling Helen that, given their newlywed status, they should really have dibs on the first batch of whatever emerged from the kitchen. Meanwhile, about thirty young couples were huddled around Wes, who stood beside a campfire with a calendar in his hand, giddily filling in reception dates.

"Wes?" A smooth, booming voice jostled through all the others. "Wes? A word, please."

Wes looked up. Standing before him in a richly furred overcoat was Cecil Harkness, a fat manila envelope in his hand.

Cecil ushered Wes to one side, kept his voice a secret. "I'll give you five thousand dollars for the recipe, Amerigo."

Wes looked around him at the crowd, the carnival of need on his lawn. He breathed deep, felt fine.

"Keep your envelope, Cecil. You'll have to wait in line like everyone else."

Cecil raised his eyebrows. Wes pushed the envelope firmly against Cecil's chest. "Keep it. And stop calling my wife Moxie. Her name is Helen. Helen Amerigo."

Cecil tried to protest, but Wes turned back to the hopeful couples. He turned back to them and those beyond them, the mighty, broken folk of Second Mountain, the masses waiting to taste, to laud, to mourn, to behold and savor their piquant, unpredictable selves. ♦

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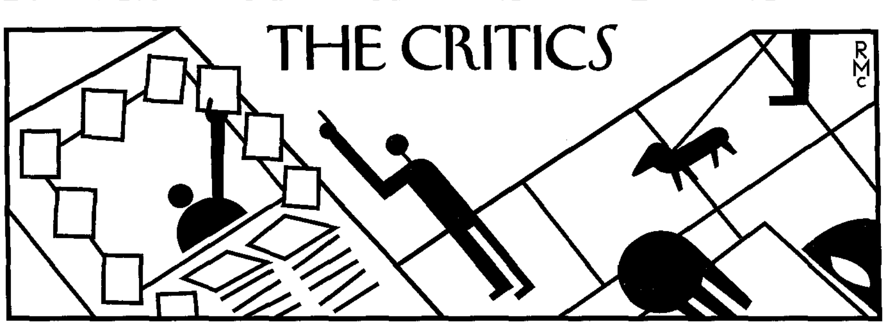

MUSICAL EVENTS

THE ART OF FANTASY

Recitals by Uchida and Andsnes.

BY ALEX ROSS

Schubert's Sonata in G begins with a beautiful, sleepy, not immediately gripping theme—not so much a melody as a murmur of chords. It keeps ambling out in various directions only to retreat to the same delectable place, as if it could not rouse itself from its G-major bed. When I was studying piano, I foolishly decided that this was one of the Master's more insignificant efforts, and skipped forward to the Sonata in B Flat, which has a way of sounding unutterably sublime even in the hands of a bumbling amateur. I felt an extra, private sense of wonder when Mitsuko Uchida played the G-Major Sonata the other night at Carnegie Hall and unlocked Schubert's secrets one by one. It is one thing to get all the notes right; any number of unsocialized conservatory prodigies can do that. It is another thing to play the thoughts within the notes, the light around them, the darkness behind them, the silence at the end of the phrase. That is what inspires awe.

Carnegie has given Uchida a place in its "Perspectives" series, which allows a performer to step outside the virtuoso role and become a roving programming consultant, responsible not only for recitals but also for chamber-music and orchestral events. Uchida's series explores links between the Austro-German classics and composers of the Second Viennese School; her recent solo recital juxtaposed Schubert with Schoenberg and Schumann. Such intellectual conceits, invigorating as they are on paper, tend to dissolve in the heat of live performance. Most of us would be happy to hear this pianist play any random music in any order, whether by Schnittke, Schnebel, Schnabel, or Cher. Uchida coaxes a sensationally warm tone out of the piano, and she can linger lovingly over individual notes without losing the main pulse of the phrase. She creates a picture so finely shaded in color and intensity that it becomes an unreal landscape in the middle distance. This total transport is what the grateful crowd at Carnegie seemed to want, in the middle of another shaky week in New York.

Uchida is a great Schubertian because she takes the music at face value, discarding stereotypes of the composer as a twee melodist or a doleful martyr. She follows without hesitation as the G-Major Sonata moves from spells of loveliness to binges of violence. At the beginning of the development section, that innocuous opening theme is suddenly shoved into the minor and blasted at high volume—it is less a development than a demonic possession. Uchida rendered this passage with the utmost force and the utmost coldness, as if she were following the instruction in Boulez's Second Sonata: "Pulverize the sound." Then the balm of G returns, almost as if those shattering blows had never happened, although scattered fortissimos recall the trauma. In the latter part of the movement, Uchida clung to each passing lyrical moment, reluctant to let the music end. Schubert marks his softer dynamics with the simple symbols *p*, *pp*, *ppp;* Uchida finds a dozen more gradations in between, microtones of pianissimo.

The "Perspectives" thesis notwithstanding, Schoenberg's Three Pieces Opus 11 sound nothing like Schubert. But Uchida lavished enough care to give them the sex appeal of, say, dissonant Ravel. Textures that come across as jarring and ugly in the hands of other players here became Fauvist splashes of color, all surface and no theory. The program ended with Schumann's Fantasy in C, which, for all its wealth of detail, carried less conviction than the Schoenberg or the Schubert. Uchida somehow missed the big picture of the work, its extravagance, its monumental, arc-like shape. Some passages were too vague and gauzy in execution—Uchida uses a lot of pedal these days—while others threatened to clatter out of control. Still, marvels unfolded on every page. I was struck by the phenomenon of a single note: an E suspended over a G-major dominant seventh, at the end of the first section. This note pulsed with inner life, as if it were being sounded by a clarinet against a blanket of strings. As before, Uchida played music on the edge of silence, and then, releasing the pedal a moment early, she played the silence itself.

Pianists with consummately brilliant technique are all too often featureless people who express nothing but their own perfection. Leif Ove Andsnes, a down-to-earth, thirty-two-year-old Norwegian, is one of the in-

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON

Mitsuko Uchida is an exacting pianist who creates finely shaded, beautifully detailed pictures in sound.

timidating few who possess power and personality in equal measure. He gave a recital at Carnegie a week after Uchida, and afterward many musicians shook their heads in astonishment. For this pianist, technique is not an end in itself but a means of expression; the supernatural dexterity of his playing is beside the point. What is more, he seems to become a better musician with each appearance. When he made his Carnegie début, in 1999, a certain high-tech steeliness in his fingerwork got in the way of the obvious intelligence of his music-making. Now, visibly more relaxed, he floods the music with grace and wit. It seems almost unfair that he should be able to do all that he does in, say, the Chopin Third Sonata: flawless, glittering passagework in the first movement; then, in the Largo, an endless, simple, singing line.

Between Chopin's Polonaise-Fantaisie and the Third Sonata, Andsnes offered an array of pieces by Grieg, Debussy, and the contemporary Japanese composer Akira Miyoshi. It was, essentially, a lightning tour of Impressionism early, middle, and late. Grieg's Lyric Pieces, of which Andsnes played five, are often pigeonholed as salon trifles, and they have seldom been heard at Carnegie Hall. "Bell Ringing," an astounding piece that abandons conventional tonality for a world of free-floating open fifths, had, according to Carnegie records, never before appeared on a recital program in the main auditorium. The dates of composition, 1889 to 1891, look like a misprint, but they aren't. Andsnes went without a pause from "Bell Ringing" to two Debussy études, as if to make the point that his Norwegian countryman was writing like Debussy almost before Debussy existed.

Andsnes's artistic profile still lacks an elusive element: spontaneity, perhaps, or emotional risk. When, more than a year ago, the august Czech pianist Ivan Moravec presented a program of Chopin and Debussy, the music flowed as if from the source, and something about Moravec's bearing suggested that he could have done it all another way if he had been in a different mood. No doubt this was an illusion, but it is an illusion that comes from a total intimacy with the repertory, a reduction of music to late-night, freewheeling conversation. It is the air of a master, and Andsnes will probably acquire it with time.

The downturn in the CD market has curtailed many recording careers, but Andsnes and Uchida are both securely busy at their respective labels—Andsnes at EMI Classics, Uchida at Philips. Uchida's ongoing survey of Schubert sonatas is the most formidable since Radu Lupu's. Her disk of the G-Major Sonata stands out, as does her grand, dark-toned traversal of the C-Minor Sonata. She also recently recorded the Schoenberg Piano Concerto, with Boulez conducting the Cleveland Orchestra; atonality never sounded so good. A two-disk set entitled "Perspectives" culls some of the best of her Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Debussy, and Schoenberg. Andsnes, too, has started a Schubert survey, in which he plays the sonatas and accompanies the tenor Ian Bostridge in small groups of songs. The first installment pairs the "big" Sonata in A with such non-standard lieder as "Pilgerweise" and "Der Unglückliche." Andsnes gives the first movement of the sonata a severe, muscular sound—he, too, takes Schubert at face value—while the Andantino is alternately melting and chilling.

This is all great music, forcefully played. For some reason, however, the new piano CD that I've listened to most is Andsnes' compilation of the Grieg Lyric Pieces. They are recorded on the composer's own piano, which has a rich, deep, slightly quirky tone, and EMI's engineers have managed to preserve the aura of sound reverberating in an intimate room. The music speaks with almost contemporary freshness; you get the sense that some kind of visionary or maverick lurked behind the stereotype of Grieg, Bard of the Fjords, but never quite made it into the open. Andsnes omits "Bell Ringing," but he devotes himself to other dreamlike miniatures— "Notturno," "Evening in the Mountains," "Gone"—that hover outside history and haunt us with the nearness of the past. ♦

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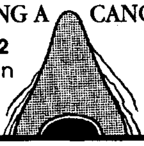

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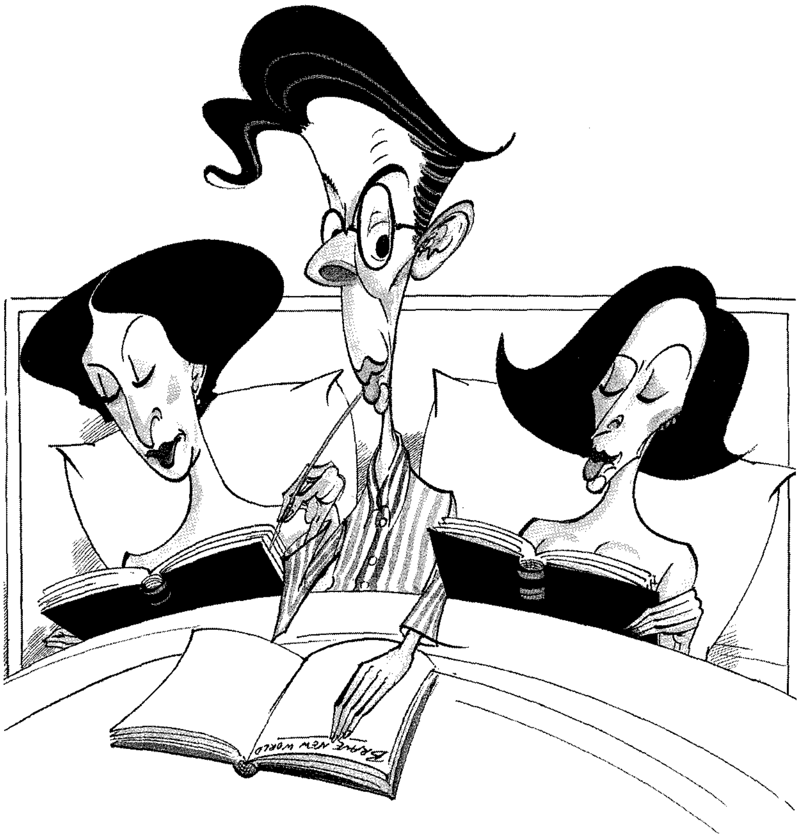
BOOKS

OUT OF SIGHT

The curious career of Aldous Huxley.

BY CLIVE JAMES

When we were young, clueless, and longing to be profound, what a thrill it was to open a novel weirdly entitled “Eyeless in Gaza.” The thrill was doubled when the author turned out to be quoting “Samson Agonistes”: “Eyeless in Gaza, at the mill with slaves.” At one point in the novel, a pair of lovers are sunbathing on the roof when a dog falls out of an airplane and explodes right beside them. A quotation from Milton and a canine kaplooey: sophisticated, or what? That, kids, was the kind of multilevel blast that Aldous Huxley used to give us when he was current. Nowadays, the titles of his books are more alive than his books, but still the legend lingers. Godlike in his height, aquiline features, and omnidirectional intelligence, Huxley was a living myth. He was the myth of the man who knew everything. Inevitably, he attracted contrary myths designed to shrivel his looming outline. Among the counter-myths was the one about his holding forth on a string of topics at the dinner table. On every topic, he knew all there was to know. But a fellow-guest noticed that all the topics began with the same letter. Suspicious, the fellow-guest retired to the library and checked up. Huxley had been quoting verbatim from the Encyclopædia Britannica.



Huxley had a vast appetite for knowledge—scientific, cultural, carnal.

GERALD SCARFE

That particular counter-myth had an element of possibility. Huxley did indeed know his way around the Encyclopædia Britannica. From one of his early essays, we find that he owned a half-sized edition on thin paper, and when travelling always had a volume of it with him. But from the same essay we learn that Huxley carried the volume only because he could not concentrate properly while on the move. From all his other writings, we must deduce that when at his desk and undistracted he read everything, and not just in the humanities but in science, history, politics, sociology, psychology, and religion. He made people who were merely quite bright feel worse than stupid: he made them feel narrow. In Britain, his land of origin, critical disparagement became common after his resettlement to America, in 1937. Hadn’t those brittle young novels—“Crome Yellow,” “Antic Hay,” “Those Barren Leaves,” “Point Counter Point”—been flashily yearning for a wider world? But any feelings among his countrymen that their star had deserted them were only an adornment to a more basic feeling, expressed in an everyday motto you can still hear in British school playgrounds: “Nobody likes a clever dick.”

When he was living in Britain, Huxley was already a presence in the slick American magazines: he was an adopted figure of fashion, showing up in *Vanity Fair* like Noël Coward or Gertrude Lawrence. When he was living in America, he was given space in *Esquire* for his views and photo spreads in *Life* for his beautiful face, plausibly represented as an icon of higher thought: he was up there with Einstein. Fame in America, as usual, meant fame everywhere. While he was alive, Aldous Huxley was one of the most famous people in the world. After his death, in 1963, his enormous reputation rapidly shrank, until, finally, he was known mainly for having written a single dystopian novel about compulsory promiscuity and babies in bottles, “Brave New World,” and for having been some kind of pioneer hippie who took mescaline to find out what would happen. People of a certain age might still say that So-and-So is like someone out of “Point Counter Point,” but they will probably not have read it recently or at all. Only a specialist in post-Great War literature could quote from “Crome Yellow” or “Antic Hay” the way people quote from “The Great Gatsby” or “Decline and Fall.”

But the time might have arrived for Huxley’s return to the discomfort zone, where we have to deal with what he said as a permanently disturbing intellectual position rather than dismissing it as an obsolete set of fads and quirks. How should we live? Can nothing harmonize the turbulence of our existence? How can we stop development from destroying the human race? The questions that racked his brain are still with us. They drove him to mysticism in the end. If we don't want them to do the same to us, we had better find out how so brilliant a man should come to believe in the All, the Good, the Transcendental, and a lot of other loftily capitalized words that look like panic disguised as tranquillity.

THE SMALL WHITE CHURCHES OF THE SMALL WHITE TOWNS

The twangy, off-key hymn songs of the poor,
Not musical, but somehow beautiful.
And the paper fans in motion, like little wings.

—Donald Justice

Shining a light in his eyes is a good way to start, because his eyesight, or lack of it, ruled his life more than he was willing to let on. He could talk about a wall-size Veronese as if he could see it in a single glance. Actually, he had to look at it a few square inches at a time. Chief among the many merits of Nicholas Murray's new biography, "Aldous Huxley" (St. Martin's; $29.95), is that it appreciates the full weight of his early tragedies without overdoing the retroactive prediction of their effects on his future behavior. But underdoing it would have been a grievous fault. One of the tragedies was the early loss of his beloved mother, another was the loss of a beloved brother; but those were merely devastating. What happened to his eyes changed the way he saw the world. Later on, as a grown man, he had to read about the discovery of antibiotics by holding his face very close to the page. Had they arrived earlier, his disease, an inflammation of the cornea, would have been cured instantly. As things were, he was left at the age of sixteen with only one eye functioning, and that only partly. He was one of Eton's star pupils, but from then on nothing was effortless.

Nor should we conclude from the famous names of his school and family that he had been issued a free pass by his background. His grandfather was the eminent Victorian scientist T. H. Huxley. His great-uncle was Matthew Arnold. But his parents, despite the splendor of his ancestry, belonged only to the working upper-middle class, not to the landed gentry. Most of the wealth in the house was the wealth of the mind, and he would have led no cushy life even had he been able to see properly. But his ruined eyes made the life of a writer into hard labor: for most of his career, he was hoping to score the hit in the theatre which would free him from the treadmill of piecework and the forcing house of the multi-book contract. At the start, he showed heroic tenacity in continuing to prepare himself. At Balliol College, Oxford, he went on reading at his usual rate of eight hours a day even if he had to do it with a magnifying glass. Sometimes not even the magnifying glass would do the trick. From his fluent prose style—it always loped along, even when its feet were no longer in contact with the earth—you might have guessed that he read Macaulay, but not that he read him in Braille. English was still a new subject at Oxford. Determined not to waste what was left of his eyesight on trash, Huxley read everything in English literature that mattered. He had already started to do the same in French literature while he was still at school. The result of his literary studies, formal and informal, was the solid foundation of what Murray calls his "wide and easy allusiveness." We are bound to acknowledge the "wide" but should put a question mark over the "easy." A macaronic tendency to drag in an untranslated quotation, whether in French, German, Italian, or Spanish, marked his prose for the rest of his life, and could have been a tacit claim that there was really not very much wrong with his eyes, if he could take in all that print. In any audience for the ballet there is someone with a bad leg who knows an awful lot about dancing.

Against the odds, Huxley managed to give himself a magnificent preliminary education. But, somehow, it had to be turned to account. The option of enlisting as an officer and joining the bulk of his generation in the graveyards of the Great War had been providentially removed by his affliction. Instead, his front line was Garsington, the country house where Lady Ottoline Morrell assembled around her the most glittering cenacle of the time. Bertrand Russell, T. S. Eliot—round up the usual suspects. If one scans the roster of those in attendance, it is hard to find an unrecognizable name. D. H. Lawrence was present to study the hypercultivated *haute bourgeoisie* that he would later despise in print for having presumed to tolerate his rebellious nature. Eyeless in Garsington, Huxley orated to the gathering because he was unable to read faces well enough to pursue an ordinary conversation. Erratically enthusiastic, Ottoline was often made fun of in retrospect, and especially by the writers she fed for free. Huxley was not guiltless in that regard. Though his adult life was marked by his personal kindness, he made a cruel caricature of her as Priscilla Wimbush in his first novel, "Crome Yellow" (1921).

In its form a throwback to the novels of Thomas Love Peacock, "Crome Yellow" teems with bright people making speeches. When they make speeches, they tend to quote other speeches. Even the few dullards, wheeled in for purposes of contrast, are weighed down with learning. Take the journalist Mr. Barbecue-Smith, allegedly the author of platitudinous best-sellers peddling spiritual uplift. Huxley introduces him thus:

> Mr. Barbecue-Smith arrived in time for tea on Saturday afternoon. He was a short and corpulent man, with a very large head and no neck. In his earlier middle age he had been distressed by this absence of neck, but was comforted by reading in Balzac's *Louis Lambert* that all the world's great men have been marked by the same peculiarity, and for a simple and obvious reason: Greatness is *nothing more nor less than the harmonious* functioning of the faculties of the head and heart; the shorter the neck, the more closely these two organs approach one another.

Mr. Barbecue-Smith should have been a perfect oaf, but Huxley could not resist making him an oaf who had read Balzac. So the range of reference deployed by Mr. Scogan, the accredited philosopher, can be imagined; or, rather, it can't. One of his speeches goes on almost uninterrupted for two and a half pages, bringing in a large part of the history of civilization since the Renaissance as he forecasts the rationally ordered future. (“In the upbringing of the Herd, humanity’s almost boundless suggestibility will be scientifically exploited.”) Pursuing an idea, the characters come to a standstill and spout, like the fountains in the garden. From our viewpoint, they would do better to pursue their passions. Luckily, Priscilla pursues hers: the New Thought, the Occult—for her, these things are objects of desire, tantalizingly retreating before her down the corridors of her house and out the French windows. Weirdly got up and tireless in her extravagance, she made the book a hit. Everybody loved it except Ottoline. Murray points out that Huxley apologized when she bridled, but the sad fact is that he betrayed her all over again, when he sent Lilian Aldwinkle heavily emoting through the pages of “Those Barren Leaves” (1925). As the chatelaine of the Cybo Malaspina, a Garsington relocated to Italy, Lilian has all of Priscilla’s mad passions plus one: she is a menopausal man-eater aching to blend with just one more genius. If all the other characters had been given the free rein he gave Lilian, “Those Barren Leaves” would never have ceased to be required reading. Alas, the book’s leading man is a typical Huxley hero: effortlessly knowledgeable and seductive, he tires of all that and retreats to a hilltop to make long speeches about his quest for a higher form of being. His soliloquies leave you longing for Lilian, who has Ottoline’s lust for life along with her thirst for a fad. Though Ottoline might have been a bit much in her untiring zeal as a people-hunter, as a dinner-table hostess she was a genuine spotter of talent, and Huxley’s talent was hard to miss, anyway.

The crucial event at Garsington came in the bewitching form of his future wife, Maria. Belgian, art-struck, and delicately lovely, she had a crush on Ottoline but transferred it to Huxley. He was a lucky man. His mother reborn, Maria became the key to his existence. She typed his manuscripts, set up the houses, fended off the pests, and, according to Sybille Bedford’s 1973 biography, vetted his mistresses, generously employing her own charms to help him pull in the best-qualified candidates. Murray’s biography features, for the first time in print, the story of the ménage à trois among Huxley, Maria, and the Bloomsbury siren Mary Hutchinson. Considering that Huxley spent so much time in later years talking about the necessity to civilize the sexual impulse, it is instructive to find out that he himself civilized it by indulging it to the hilt. In “Brave New World,” it will be remembered, the Alpha males of the ruling élite get their fill of the designated babes. It turns out that Huxley wasn’t just dreaming.

The old, integrated Europe is generally thought to have been atomized by the Great War, but it had fallen apart only politically. Still the stamping ground of the artistic-minded élite, Europe had entered on yet another civilized phase. For English people with the means and tastes to get themselves to a villa and stay there, France and Italy were homes away from home. Effectively, there were no borders for the enlightened. With Maria smoothing the way at the wheel of a new Bugatti, the successful young novelist Huxley was one of the star turns and recorders of a movable feast. It is easy to see how he was confirmed in the insidious idea that the cultivated élite should cherish its separation from the mass of humanity. Though later on he softened the proclivity, he never quite lost his readiness to blame the *mobile vulgus* for multiplying at an indecent rate. (He even had the percentages worked out: 0.5 per cent were in the club, 99.5 per cent were outside. Hands up if you know where you fit.) The best we can say for him is that he did not fall for Fascism.

There were Fascists all around his Italian villas. Though he initially saw them as not much worse than a bad comic opera whose chorus was prone to fisticuffs, he finally concluded, long before the Nazis established their full grip on Germany, that a totalitarian solution to the anomalies of mass society was worse than the problem. Commendably, he grasped most of the horrors of the Soviet regime straightaway. He wasn’t the only one who thought that industrial society was turning out too many idiots,

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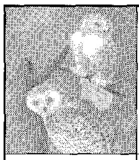

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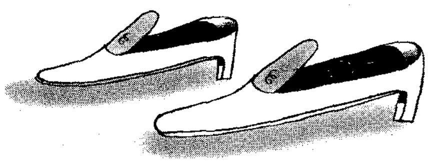
and he was on the side of the angels, or seemed so, in proclaiming that one of the greatest dangers the idiots posed was that they might elect dictators. Not liking dictators qualified him as a progressive in a period when George Bernard Shaw saluted Hitler as an exemplar of creative energy and H. G. Wells nose-dived to the foot of Stalin's throne. As early as 1928, in "Point Counter Point," the crowning novel of his early success, Huxley had created a British proto-Fascist called Everard Webley. With a strident rhetoric that was later echoed by Sir Oswald Mosley (moving in the same high social circle, Huxley had spotted Mosley on the way up), Webley makes long speeches about planning. The speeches help to wreck what might have been a classic novel. An obvious victim of Huxley's multi-book contract, "Point Counter Point" has at least two different false starts folded into it, and, as usual, most of the characters speak essays to the air, instead of speaking dialogue to each other. Fortunately, the essayist who speaks for Huxley is not Webley. It is the brilliant (of course) writer Philip Quarles: "The problem for me is to transform a detached intellectual scepticism into a way of harmonious all-round living." Quarles is after the All. Webley is after power, and Huxley knew there was a difference.

Nevertheless, Huxley followed prevalent fashion in assuming that industrial societies would have to be organized somehow, and that some form of élite would do the organizing. Beneath the supposed satire of "Brave New World," which was a sensation when it appeared, in 1932, and for long afterward, there is a deep acceptance of this putative necessity. In the book, the Alpha ruling élite controls the supply of sex and drugs, the rewards by which they themselves are consoled in their task, and by which all the lower orders down to the Epsilon semi-morons are kept in line. It hasn't turned out that way. Today, the supply does the controlling, and the Alphas are even more likely than the Epsilons to end up being treated for addiction. If Huxley was warning the world that even a free society might be tempted into totalitarianism, he was doing something useful. The society of "Brave New World" includes an outcast reservation of Savages—they can be visited in their theme park by helicopter—who suffer from love, pain, and poetry, as the human race once did before science came to its aid. Thus Huxley pays lip service to his humanist belief that creativity is too important a hostage to be given over to an ideal of improvement. But he was scarcely likely to aid his humanist cause by assuming that the alternative to planning wrong was planning right. Deep within the book is an idea that he had nursed from childhood and would never lose: one way or another, an élite would have to be in charge. "Brave New World" doesn't attack that idea. It reinforces it, by leaving open the possibility that there might be a less flagrantly manipulative way for an intelligentsia to determine the lives of the common people.

Huxley's fondness for the idea of "intelligent and active oligarchies" (the term popped up in a 1927 article for *Harper's* called "The Outlook for American Culture") might have sprung from his shortage of sympathy for the 99.5 per cent. No doubt he backed eugenics for the same reason. But his pacifism was something else: it indicated a shortage of political sense. As a leading light of the Peace Pledge Union in the nineteen-thirties, he went public with his private notion that war would happen less often if more people could be persuaded to dislike it. The persuasion would be done by the enlightened, who would give an example by personally embracing a life of peace. Just as he could never accept that a decent system of ethics would be more likely to arise in a school for mentally handicapped children than among any intellectual élite, no matter how attuned to the Transcendental, he could never accept that peace is not a principle, merely a desirable state of affairs.

Huxley, however, was not the only genius talking poppycock about politics, and few of the others had his cachet as a novelist. His success in Europe was complete, but his need to earn would never let him rest. Financially, he was walking a tightrope no stronger than a shoestring. His reasons for resettling in California were excellent, and there was not even any need to lower his exalted standards of smart company. With America's share of the next war drawing ever nearer, Los Angeles became one of the intellectual centers of the modern world as European refugees flocked in. Thomas Mann had been on the Normandie with the Huxleys on the trip over (characteristically, the modern Goethe had travelled first class, but uncharacteristically he condescended to visit them in steerage), and now he was sharing the same sunlight. America didn't isolate Huxley. But it did insulate him.



Those who think that Huxley's fine brain turned to mush in California are apt to ascribe his declension to the mind-bending stuff he took in: the Wisdom of the East, hallucinogenic drugs, ESP. They tend to ignore the significance of what he left out. He never really grasped that the war was bound to be something much bigger than a conflict between nationalisms; that it would leave, when the smoke cleared, no alternative to accepting liberal democracy as the only guarantee of liberty; and that in liberty there could be no such thing as a universally shared "perennial philosophy." ("The Perennial Philosophy," his 1945 book compounding all the positive thoughts of West and East into a tutti-frutti of moral uplift, was the equivalent, in its day, of "It Takes a Village": there was nothing in it to object to, and that, of course, was the objection.) He was fatally well placed to go on believing that mankind could and should aspire to a higher state than the one it was stuck in.

There was nothing perverse about his interest in Eastern philosophy. Nor was there necessarily anything preposterous about his conviction that mind-expanding drugs might be worth looking into. People who appear to have everything must be excused for bombing their own brains in the hope that there might be something more. Huxley's interest in ESP, however, showed a serious anomaly. At Duke University, Professor J. B. Rhine had made extrasensory perception a laboratory study. Huxley was not just keen to believe that Rhine had discovered something substantial; he wanted to believe that statistical analysis had proved Rhine correct. Huxley's sympathy for the sciences made him a valuable advocate for their creative connection to the humanities. But the language that connected the sciences was mathematics, and his competence in mathematics went no further than high school. About science, the best Huxley could do was talk an extraordinarily good game.

Damagingly, his fluent talk about science mesmerized even him. He tried to sound scientific about the world's political crises, but doing so made him insufficiently critical. He went on advocating solutions to problems that he had misstated. He kept on wondering how an economy could be rationally planned, without ever wondering whether it should be. Huxley still thought that if the world's population increased beyond a certain point all those people would run out of food. Never having placed sufficient weight on the fact that it was the advance of technology that had increased the birth rate, he placed still less weight on the capacity of technology to solve the problem.

Safely domiciled in a part of the world that suffered least from deprivation and political instability, he took his surroundings for granted as a set of conditions from which mankind could aspire to higher things, instead of as the higher thing that the rest of the world could only aspire to. Had he been less cushioned, the war and its aftermath might have made more impact on his thought. Karl Popper, exiled to New Zealand during the war, was forced by the memory of his experience in Europe to reach a minimum definition of democracy. It was the system in which the government could be replaced at the people's whim, so that no oligarchy, intelligent or otherwise, could perpetuate itself in power. The implication was that the 99.5 per cent didn't need to be instructed; all they needed was to have a vote. In Britain, Friedrich von Hayek reached the conclusion that a liberal democracy could have a planned economy only to the point where government regulations protected the people against arbitrary injustice. In Paris when the war was over, Albert Camus, having seen both Nazis and Communists in action from close up, defined democracy as that regime created and sustained by those who know that they do not know everything.

Huxley might have reached some of these conclusions himself had he not remained so convinced that mass ignorance was the world's chief enemy. All the opportunities were there for Huxley in America, and he even, for a while, took one of them. The extravagance of California overwhelmed his analytical faculties for just long enough to allow his full creativity to take over. Unfairly overshadowed by Evelyn Waugh's "The Loved One," Huxley's own response to California, "After Many a Summer Dies the Swan," was and remains his best novel by far. (In Britain, it is more catchily called just "After Many a Summer": an American editor must have thought the allusion to Tennyson needed spelling out.) Where his early novels were silted up by the Nilotic flood of his compulsive erudition, "After Many a Summer" shows, for once, a gusto for the vulgar. Every Los Angeles novel quotes the billboards, but Huxley quotes them with enjoyment—possibly because the words were big enough for him to read. Sunbathing on the heights of her magic castle, Virginia Maunciple, the pure-minded sexpot, harks forward irresistibly to Terry Southern's Candy Christian. Virginia knows nothing. She merely exists, while the men go mad around her. Most of the other characters are, for a change, sufficiently alive to speak their own individual dialogue, instead of getting it from the library that Huxley carried in his head. Even more unusual for Huxley, the import of the book is that the observable world is all there is. The shattering final scene, when the immortal people turn out to be apes, is there to tell us that, wherever humanity might be heading, eternal life isn't it.

That one marvellous novel pointed the way Huxley might have gone next. But finally it, too, is programmatic, and proves that Huxley was right to suppose that he was something less than an artist. Ever since Garsington, Huxley had been great friends with D. H. Lawrence, who died in Maria's arms. In homage to Lawrence, Huxley had always been generously ready to concede that feeling might rank above thinking. But Huxley needed a humility beyond generosity: he needed to see that his longed-for higher state of being, the harmony that would make a unity out of eternal conflict, already existed, and that art was it. He loved art of every kind. His essays prove it. Few critics in modern times have written better about poetry. When he talks about Chaucer, he sends you running to the nearest copy of the Canterbury Tales. In

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a 1923 essay, he said of Chaucer, "He is not horrified by the behavior of his fellow-beings, and he has no desire to reform them." Coming from Huxley, who did have a desire to reform them, the praise rings doubly true: it ran against the grain of his preconceptions but was in line with his aesthetic sense. To read all the essays in sequence is like being enrolled at the college of your dreams. They have all recently been published again as "Complete Essays" (Ivan R. Dee; $35 each), in six scholarly volumes (not scholarly enough in places: too many of those foreign phrases still go untranslated), edited by Robert S. Baker and James Sexton. With due acknowledgment for their efforts, however, a less daunting way to read Huxley's essays is in the original collections. "Music at Night," published in 1931, would be a good place to start, because it shows how wide-ranging and undogmatic he could be when writing about the humanities. When engaged with them, he was responding to what he really knew. In other fields, he only thought he knew—a different state of consciousness altogether.

Despite the inevitable outbursts of bookishness, Huxley's essays are easy to read and always informative, even when all they now inform us of is how much of his scientific information has gone out of date. What they lack is the inventiveness he lavished on his novels but seldom followed up because he wanted to philosophize instead. If the novels were too much invaded by the essay, his essays were insufficiently invaded by the novel, which is a soul-searching instrument, a register of the mind's adventures, not of the memory's contents. If he had put everything into his expository prose, he might have lifted it to a level at which it would have been possible to question his own assumptions, and thus make a drama out of a monologue. An essay written in 1956, "Hyperion to a Satyr," hints that he might have invented the New Journalism all on his own, had he realized the potential. Here's how it starts: "A few months before the outbreak of the Second World War I took a walk with Thomas Mann on a beach some fifteen or twenty miles southwest of Los Angeles." And it gets better: "At our feet, and as far as the eye could reach in all directions, the sand was covered with small whitish objects, like dead caterpillars. Recognition dawned. The dead caterpillars were made of rubber."

It turns out that the beach no longer has such visitations, thanks to the postwar construction of the gigantic Hyperion Activated Sludge Plant. Unfortunately for the reader, the intervention of the sludge plant is the point where Huxley's tactics as an essayist return to normal. He gives us a long, global, and no doubt reliable history of sewage treatment since earliest times, but neglects the opportunity to argue with himself. For a writer who had spent his lifetime decrying the onward march of the Machine and rooting for the ideal of the small, self-sustaining community, an industrial development the size of the Hyperion sludge plant should have given him pause to reflect. He approves of it but forgets that his approval should be the start of a discussion, not the end. One side of him could have said that the plant was busy neutralizing waste products that need not have existed if industrial society had not been churning out the wrong stuff. But another side could have said that the ordinary human waste was being converted into a stream of water a lot less toxic than the Ganges. In such an internal argument, his admiration for Eastern wisdom might have had to be tempered with a more nuanced view of Western practicality. He could have faced the possibility that a world free to do so would go on creating itself with an exponential complexity that could not be fully known, and that even the brightest analyst would have to resign himself to running out of answers. But perhaps, tacitly, he had faced it, and had gone seeking refuge in the upper realms for that very reason.

If he had dramatized the conflicts that were inherent in his concepts, he might have arrived at the higher reality that was already all around him. He might have helped to defend its confusing multiplicity against the attack that would be a long time coming but is now here: the attack from the imposers of harmony, the adepts of the All. Alas, he was one of them, because of his ineradicable belief that the mass of mankind was too dense to see the inner light. But there is no mass of mankind. There are only individuals, and except in a society that is not free they will always refuse to be persuaded that their everyday lives are not worth living. You can tell from their faces, if you've got eyes. ♦

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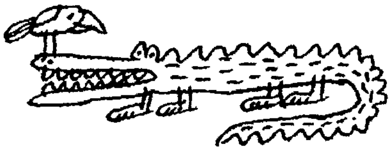
BRIEFLY NOTED

Somersault, *by Kenzaburo Oe, translated from the Japanese by Philip Gabriel (Grove; $26).* Oe's first novel since he won the Nobel Prize, in 1994, takes place against the background of a religious cult's terrorist plan (even more drastic than Aum Shinrikyo's 1995 gas attack on the Tokyo subway), which is thwarted when the cult's leaders appear on television to renounce their creed—the "somersault" of the title. Now, ten years later, the cult's charismatic guru is planning to reëstablish his church. Oe's prose has always had an intentional roughness, but here the characters speak like robots and move as if they had screws for joints. Through the believers' motivations for joining the cult, Oe explores the struggle of contemporary Japanese to situate themselves between a traditional culture and the bullet-train pace of the boom years, but this dynamic is lost amid exhaustive explanations of the new church's dogma.

Gordon, *by Edith Templeton (Pantheon; $22).* Published pseudonymously in England in 1966 and banned soon afterward, this eerie tale of sexual obsession is narrated by a young woman adrift in London just after the Second World War. She meets a "frightening, sinister, implacable" psychiatrist who, over all protest, invades her, body and mind, arousing previously unsuspected tastes for submission and humiliation. One part "Story of O" to two parts Muriel Spark, the book beautifully evokes the tightened belts and loosened morals of postwar London. By today's standards, "Gordon" is hardly explicit, but the thrill the narrator gets from non-consensual degradation and the ice-cold way she describes it remain unsettling: "There were times when he hurt me, and times when he did not, and I could never make out whether he hurt me purposely or whether it was accidental."



To Have and to Hold: An Intimate History of Collectors and Collecting, *by Philipp Blom (Overlook; $27.95).* Taking as its inspiration Walter Benjamin's dictum that a collector's passion borders on "the chaos of memory," this curiously moving history argues that collecting is driven by the desire to control that chaos. Blom traces the development of collections since the Renaissance through lively portraits of famous collectors, like the Englishman Sir Thomas Phillips, who believed that he was meant to own one copy of every book in the world; the Austrian Franz Joseph Gall, who lined his walls with row upon row of skulls; and the American Alex Shear, who has amassed more than a hundred thousand relics of nineteen-fifties America. Blom shows that there is no limit to what can be collected, or to the intensity of the pursuit. Ultimately, he suggests, "the shadow looming over every cabinet" is a kind of willful, if unacknowledged, futility. To collect is to freeze the world in its tracks and hold it still. But if this succeeded what would be left to collect?

Long Time Coming, *by Michael Lesy (Norton; $65).* The Farm Security Administration's ambitious program, inaugurated in 1935, to document American life in photographs produced a file of nearly a hundred and fifty thousand negatives. Hundreds have since become iconic, almost to the point of cliché: portraits of rural poverty, migrant workers, and mining towns by Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, and Ben Shahn. Here, in a collection all the more impressive for its understated presentation, Lesy examines the conception and evolution of the file under the F.S.A. administrator, Roy Stryker, and spotlights some four hundred pictures, many previously unpublished, from the program's eight-year existence. These depictions of ordinary life—social gatherings, urban streetscapes, and small-town rituals—succeed, by their range and depth, in restoring a sense of the extraordinary to an enterprise now frequently taken for granted.

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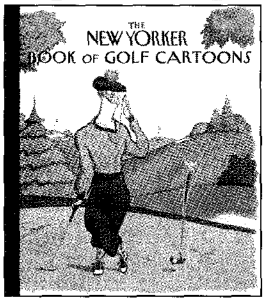
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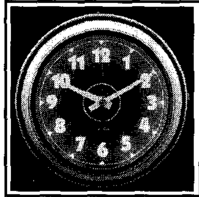

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LOVE IS THE DRUG

Van Gogh's Mrs. Robinson.

BY HILTON ALS

He was born on March 30, 1853, in Groot-Zundert, a village in the southern Netherlands, near the Belgian border, to a father, Theodorus van Gogh, who was himself an anomaly—a Protestant clergyman in a predominantly Catholic region. With his high white collars, his erect posture, and his love for an unforgiving God, Theodorus demanded order, rationality, and unremitting guilt. His flame-haired oldest son was not the first Vincent van Gogh; a baby had been given the name a year earlier, but had died at birth. And, like most children who grow up consoling their parents for the loss of a child no one ever really knew, Vincent could never live up to the legend of his brother, the ghost. Nor could he fit comfortably into the traditional role of eldest child—responsible, uncomplaining, a model of good sense for the siblings who follow. He struggled all his life—which ended with his suicide in 1890, only eleven years after he had decided to devote himself to art—to be heard above the drone of what might have been, had the first, the superior, Vincent lived. In all probability, *that* Vincent, the dead boy, would not have been so awkward, so emotionally overwrought, so determined to express himself to others. But, whether he liked it or not, this Vincent was alive. At the age of sixteen, he was given a junior post at an art dealership in The Hague, where one of his uncles had been a prominent seller. In 1873, when he was twenty, he moved to the firm's London gallery, where he worked on and off for three years, drawing sometimes and writing letters to his beloved brother, Theo.

From those letters, of course, and from a memoir by Johanna van Gogh-Bonger, Theo's wife, we know that van Gogh's story was one of enlightenment and suffering—suffering as a kind of intellectual pursuit, a discipline that transcends the petty contrivances of others' half-lived lives. Vincent was one of those desperate souls whose despair we bourgeois almost envy, whose genius shows us up; like Rimbaud, he was one of the first rock-and-roll martyrs, a James Dean given to private visions and to a surfeit of feeling that flooded his densely worked canvases. "To the best of our belief . . . someone who lacks courage, or uses a won't-commit-myself approach, or doesn't dare stake his life with a smile, would be better off not even trying to win a real woman's heart," Vincent wrote to Theo in 1881, when he was trying to earn the affections of his young cousin Kee Vos. He went on, "From the very beginning of this love I have felt that unless I threw myself into it . . . committing myself totally and with all my heart, utterly and forever, I had absolutely no chance, and that even if I do throw myself into it in this way the chance is very slight. But what do I care if my chance is great or small?"

The ugly, messy pursuit of love, the recklessness of self-invention—these are what the Dutch actor Jochum ten Haaf conveys in his startling portrayal of van Gogh in "Vincent in Brixton" (at the Golden Theatre). According to the program note, the play, by Nicholas Wright, uses "bits and pieces of evidence" left by van Gogh and others to reimagine his years in London, where he lived at a boarding house and boys' school in Brixton, a grimy low-lying district south of

Ten Haaf and Higgins in "Vincent in Brixton." Photograph by Dana Lixenberg.

the Thames. Like "The Invention of Love," Tom Stoppard's dramatic study of A. E. Housman, Wright's play is a kind of "what if" proposition, though on a smaller scale; "Vincent in Brixton" is about one complicated collision between genius and domestic order.

The play opens in the kitchen of the boarding house: we see a long, worn wooden table, pots boiling on the stove, herbs growing in clay pots. A door, stage left, leads to a garden. As created by Tim Hatley (who also designed the appealing costumes), it is a space where everyone and everything has its place. The teapot sits here, and the landlady, Mrs. Loyer (Clare Higgins), who doubles as headmistress, sits there. A middle-aged widow haunted by the loss of her husband fifteen years earlier, Mrs. Loyer distances herself from her loneliness—and from the awareness of her body's slow decline—through the busywork of living. Her voice raspy with barely repressed rage, her eyes rimmed with kohl and narrowed in suspicion, she is a woman in control: of the household, of her boarders, of the books, which she keeps with ruthless efficiency.

Enter Vincent. He's a young art dealer in need of a room, a thrifty boy who earns a decent wage but whose intensity and forthrightness make all that anchors Mrs. Loyer—the preparing of fish cakes, the grading of papers, the washing of dishes—seem inconsequential. Vincent, who is just beginning to draw in his spare time, is as possessed by ghosts as Mrs. Loyer is. "My mother had a son who died on the day he was born," he tells his landlady. "They buried him at the door of my father's church. . . . I used to read his gravestone every Sunday. . . . I'd stand and read until they pulled me in to hear my father preach the sermon. Then I'd think about the amazing fact that I'd been born, and buried, and born all over again. That God had given me all my second chances rolled into one. And I'd never again have any others." Unlike Mrs. Loyer, however, he doesn't try to stave off grief with domesticity; he wants to incorporate all the phases of life—even death—into every conversation or exchange. He has never been with a woman, and his skin, oily and blemished, is the visual manifestation of his anxiety—about women, about his own alienation in the face of their complete otherness. "The only thing that would stop me thinking about girls all day is a girl," he tells a fellow-lodger. "I see them every place I go. There were days last summer when there seemed to be nobody else but girls. But I can't walk up to a girl I've never met and start up a conversation. . . . I wasn't brought up like that." Watching Mrs. Loyer and her daughter Eugenie (the lovely Sarah Drew, who resembles a less optimistic Jennifer Ehle) sweep through the kitchen, unbending in their corsets and their brisk capability, shows Vincent what he isn't made of. Eugenie quickly becomes the focal point of his obsession, but she is already involved with Sam Plowman (Pete Starrett), another boarder and would-be painter, an amiable journeyman who dabbles in charcoals and watercolors but—to Vincent, at least—lacks the passion of a true artist.

Ten Haaf uses the stage as one would use a dance floor. He lurches and rocks and extends his arms abruptly, as he struggles to match the rhythm of the other characters: a punk rocker trying to waltz. Even in his quiet moments—when he's listening, or waiting for a response—he vibrates with a love of performance that merges with Vincent's love of painting. He manages to make Higgins, who has a tendency to go for the showy flourishes—despite her ample frame, she's a racehorse anxious to get through the gate—quiet down and take her time.

When Vincent discovers in Mrs. Loyer a "mirror" of his own despair and transfers his affections, she returns the recognition: "I was just on the point of throwing you out, when I turned and looked . . . I thought I'd never seen anyone quite so . . . raw and suffering, yes, but quite so ruthless. I couldn't resist it." He risks everything by declaring his love, and his landlady becomes a stranger in her own home—a bumbling, bungling girl-woman, her eyes widening in disbelief, her back curving like the stem beneath a heavy flower. Vincent undresses her soul, and Higgins, under the masterly direction of Richard Eyre, lets us see the striptease. Not a striptease, exactly, but an unmooring—from the grief that has defined her for so long.

She lets us see, too, the fury that her vulnerability unleashes. When the self-absorbed Vincent returns to England from a visit home, with his tactless eighteen-year-old sister, Anna (the funny and lively Liesel Matthews), in tow, Mrs. Loyer becomes less the den mother who wears her forbearance like a brooch at her throat than a character from Sylvia Plath ("Viciousness in the kitchen!" begins Plath's poem "Lesbos"). Anna accuses Mrs. Loyer of keeping a dirty house, and tells anyone who will listen that she knows what's best for Vincent. "He's been a failure all his life," she says. "Nobody in the family thinks he will come to anything." Everyone knows that he's incapable of taking care of himself, and isn't it about time he had a wife? Mrs. Loyer is clearly not an option in Anna's view, and Higgins can barely contain her frustration at the younger woman's imperiousness, her foreignness, her refusal to believe in Vincent's attraction to Mrs. Loyer. Higgins's hurt is painful and true. The white dress that she adopted after they first made love seems suddenly weighted, her demeanor that of a widow again.

In the play's softer second half—the action feels less organic than in the first, a self-conscious attempt to keep the production on a "theatrical" track—Vincent returns again after an absence of almost three years, not as an art dealer or an artist this time but as a schoolteacher and assistant preacher. Eugenie and Sam have married and had two children. But the grandchildren seem less important to Mrs. Loyer—"They're just ordinary babies," she says—than Vincent, and his failure to live up to her ambitions for him. His sudden departure after Anna's intrusion left her loveless, Godless. "All I wanted was . . . to be the cause of something remarkable," she tells him. "And my desire, my longing for somebody near to me to get out of the rut, to reach for something higher than *this*, was real. . . . I had hopes for you. But what happened is so unbelievably foolish, so disgraceful. . . . It's like a terrible joke." Still, when Vincent walks through the door with holes in his shoes and a sketchbook in his hands, Mrs. Loyer seems to grow hopeful again, despite herself. As he sits down to sketch his boots, she can't take her eyes off him, and neither can we. "Vincent in Brixton" may have a conventional structure—boy meets girl, girl loses boy—but it is those conventions that free ten Haaf and Higgins to develop an unconventional and striking intensity of their own. ♦

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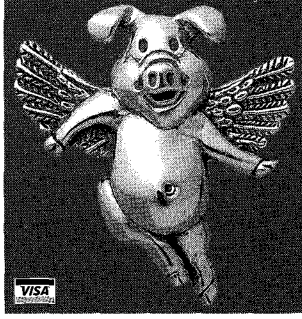

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ON TELEVISION

BOY TALK

The late-night locker room.

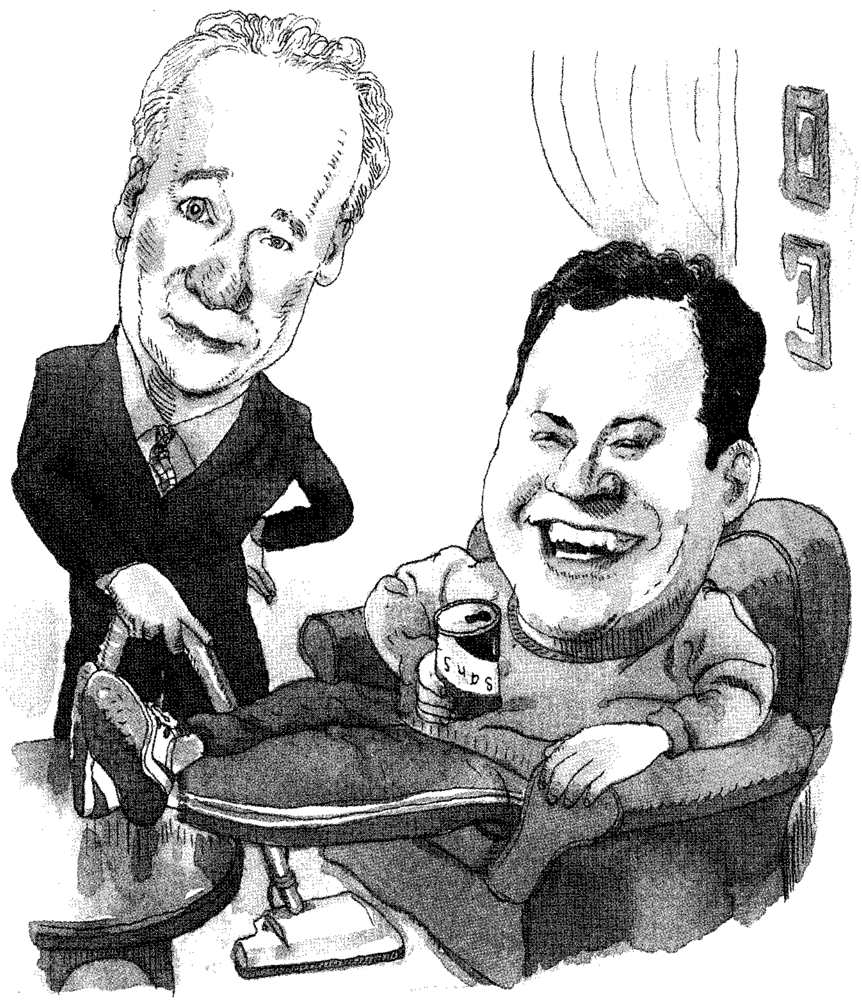
BY NANCY FRANKLIN

Last year, much was made of ABC's secret, and then absurdly publicized, courting of David Letterman for its 11:30 P.M. time slot, a move that would have meant the demise of "Nightline" and of Bill Maher's "Politically Incorrect," which followed it. In the end, Letterman decided to stay at CBS, and "Nightline" was safe. But Maher had probably already sealed his fate on September 17, 2001, the night his show resumed broadcasting after the terrorist attacks six days earlier. Amplifying the comments of one of his guests, the writer Dinesh D'Souza, who took issue with government officials calling the terrorists cowards, Maher said, "We have been the cowards, lobbing cruise missiles from two thousand miles away. That's cowardly. Staying in the airplane when it hits the building, say what you want about it, it's not cowardly." Maher's point was that thinking in terms of cowardice or bravery wasn't particularly useful, because it wouldn't help us understand why the attacks had happened, but his remarks became notorious, thanks to a campaign started by a radio talk-show host in Texas. Some big advertisers pulled out of "Politically Incorrect" and some stations stopped showing it, and the flap extended all the way to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue—where Ari Fleischer, the White House spokesman, who hadn't actually seen the show, said that Americans "need to watch what they say, watch what they do."

"Politically Incorrect," which was cancelled in mid-2002, was a forum in which guests could speak freely about current events. The trouble was that even when the guests Maher chose (or their publicists) had done their homework, they were often unqualified to talk about the night's given subjects. They were usually appearing on the show because they had a book or a movie to promote, or because, like Arianna Huffington and Ann Coulter, they were indefatigable self-promoters. People talked at and over one another, and the host often seemed contemptuous of the whole affair, as if being annoyed were proof of intelligence. Maher *is* intelligent, and quick, but as a comedian he's a heavy-handed drag—low on wit and full of easy ironies. He lacks the verbal flair of, say, Dennis Miller or Chris Rock, and, watching him, you rarely felt entertained or enlightened—you felt as if you were being poked in the sternum by a brainy bully.

And now he's back, on HBO on Friday nights, doing an hour-long live show called "Real Time with Bill Maher." HBO's ads for the show called him "too hot for TV," but so far the main difference between his new show and the old one is that it's less funny and uses more swear words. On the first night, Maher announced that he wasn't going to cast his celebrity net as wide as he had before, and that he would have eight or nine regular panelists. This means that the free-for-all quality is gone—the motley guest list, as it turns out, was what gave "Politically Incorrect" an element of unpredictability. "Real Time," in contrast, feels more canned than live. The guests are all polished performers: Coulter, Huffington, Alec Baldwin, Tim Robbins, Dennis Miller, D. L. Hughley—none of them "too hot for TV." There is one new face: Paul F. Tompkins, a comedian who does a bit on current affairs on every show and has about as much edge as a beanbag chair.

There's also more of Maher in the new show, and it's no big surprise that more Maher is less. He's a jerk of the old school, full of unexamined anxiety and arrogance, with a habit of using sexual stereotypes from half a century ago both to put down and to compliment people. "I love it when Tony Blair tries to talk tough," he said. "He makes Bush look like Vin Diesel. I tell ya, there's only two guys less convincing when they try to sound tough, and both of them are on 'Will & Grace.'" (Memo to Maher: And they're both much funnier than you are.) Introducing Monica Crowley, a Ph.D. and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, he said to the comedian Larry Miller, "That's a good-looking doctor, huh, Larry? I'd like to get a checkup from her." When the panel was discussing the plans for the World Trade Center area, and a picture of the architect Daniel Libeskind was displayed, Maher interjected, "He just broke up with Elton John." And it probably goes without saying that he wasted no time calling Michael Jackson's potency into question. Maher's self-regarding, *Playboy* Party Joke mentality makes him seem out of it. But then it's hard to have your ear to the ground when you're busy admiring yourself in the mirror.



Egghead and Butt-head: unheavenly hosts Bill Maher and Jimmy Kimmel.

BARRY BLITT

Maher has said that the networks don't know what they're doing, and there can hardly be a better confirmation of that than the show that is now in Maher's old ABC time slot, "Jimmy Kimmel Live," a dead-on-arrival talk show with a charisma-free host, aimed at pre-adolescent male viewers between eighteen and thirty-four. So far, the funniest thing I've seen while watching the show, which débuted after the Super Bowl, wasn't even on the show—it was a Sprint commercial featuring two hundred dachshunds. Kimmel, who should be admitted immediately to the Witless Protection Program, has had Beavis and Butt-head's dream career, with such credits as "The Man Show," which featured buxom women bouncing on trampolines, and a show on which celebrities make crank phone calls. When Janeane Garofalo was the co-host of "Jimmy Kimmel Live" (there's a new one every week), the two of them had several conversations about irritable bowel syndrome. Last week, Kimmel's co-host (and girlfriend), the comedian Sarah Silverman, did a sketch at a senior center, in which she sang to old people, "You're going to die soon. It's not cold in here, you're just dying." One night, Kimmel, who has interviewed his share of reality-TV celebs (he asked the guy from "Joe Millionaire" the penetrating question "Have you had a chance to take a vacation or anything?"), referred to the packed lineup of reality shows that had aired that evening as "the Christmas morning of TV crap." On his show, every day is Christmas.

Ali G, the cheerily dim-witted alter ego of the British comedian Sacha Baron Cohen, is a household name in England, and he is about to become one in the United States—at least, in houses that get HBO, which is running six episodes of his half-hour comedy show, "Da Ali G Show," after "Real Time with Bill Maher." A white guy who, in wanna-be fashion, has adopted hip-hop mannerisms and clothes (the shiny, baggy track suit, the jewelry, the wraparound sunglasses, the skullcap), Ali G, in his faux Jamaican accent, says that the mission of his show is "to heducate, to motivate, and to—," and then he can't think of another word to complete the series. He interviews authority figures, such as James Woolsey, the former director of the C.I.A., and Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the former Secretary General of the United Nations, who are unaware that they're being put on but show patience and good will when dealing with this boob, since their mission is, like his, to heducate. (Not much seems to sink in, though: Ali G can't understand why Disneyland isn't a member of the U.N.)

Baron Cohen also appears as Borat, a Kazakh reporter who's taping a show on American culture, and these bits are sometimes hilarious. "In U.S. and A.," he says to the camera during a segment about our mating rituals, "if you want to marry a girl, you cannot just go to her father's house and swap her for fifteen gallons of insecticide." But when Borat insinuates himself into regular people's lives, goes to dinner with them, and then makes them uncomfortable with his free talk about sex and farting, he's taking unfair advantage—they are his hosts, after all, and have to be polite, even when he isn't. Ali G occasionally does the same thing—at one point, he manages to insult a Catholic priest and an atheist in one fell swoop. But, though I'm not crazy about humor that relies on people being tricked, his deep-seated, persistent cluelessness, which is both well-meaning and ruthless—in the sense that he never breaks character to let his interviewees in on the joke—wore me down to the point where it won me over. ♦

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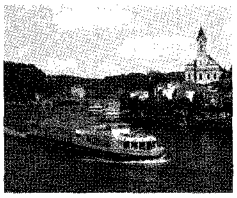

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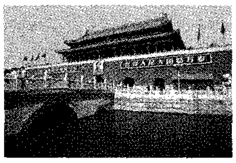

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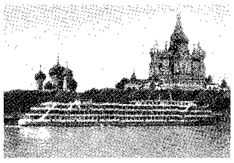

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

RIDING INTO BATTLE

"Tears of the Sun" and "Old School."

BY DAVID DENBY

"Tears of the Sun," the new military adventure movie starring Bruce Willis, is a troubled dream of Africa. The physical terrain (with Hawaii standing in for Nigeria) is a stunningly beautiful fantasia of dark high grass surrounded by thick rain forests; the human terrain is a sorrowful tangle of ethnic cleansing and atrocity. Directed by the gifted African-American Antoine Fuqua ("Training Day"), "Tears of the Sun" is visually alive, and the movie tries, within the severely formulaic limits of action-adventure films, to be morally alive, too. A crack unit of eight Navy SEALs, led by Lieutenant A. K. Waters (Willis), is dropped into Nigeria in the middle of civil strife between the Muslim majority and the Ibo Christian minority. The team's assignment is to rescue an American citizen, the Italian-born doctor Lena Kendricks (Monica Bellucci), before Muslim soldiers reach her Catholic-mission hospital. When the Americans arrive, however, the doctor refuses to leave her patients, and Waters, using a ruse to separate her from them, pushes her into a rescue helicopter. But then a twist: aloft, he sees what the marauders are doing to the Ibo, and he turns the helicopters around and goes back to rescue the remaining patients. The Americans, with an assorted group of men and women in their charge, head on foot for the Cameroon border, pursued through the jungle by an army of three hundred. Then they turn and fight.

The movie is a fable of American military virtue. Initially, the men perform like the moving parts of a superb machine: each is a killer with a specialty; individual character traits are little more than different aspects of a common fighting temperament. Like earlier small-unit military adventure films—"The Guns of Navarone," "The Dirty Dozen," "Black Hawk Down"—the movie is a celebration of improvisation under fire and of self-sacrifice, for it turns out, of course, that the machine has a soul. Lieutenant Waters, an inexorable and stoic hero—a Navy lifer who speaks in monosyllables—bears some sort of mysterious psychic wound. It's been a long time, he confides to Lena Kendricks, since he has "done anything good." Waters is both enraged and inspired by the doctor's high-mindedness, and there's a lot of fighting between the two—a discreetly sexy prelude to romance—before American power and European scruples join together (a relief, perhaps, to moviegoers exercised over the current rift in transatlantic relations). The Americans turn away from self-interest and do the right thing; the nation's military purpose is moral in the end. As you may have gathered, the release of "Tears of the Sun" could not be better timed. Call it "Black Hawk Up."

The Italian star Monica Bellucci is a flaming dark beauty with snapping eyes and a sumptuous décolletage that is rather alarmingly available to the mosquitoes. Running through the bush with her shirt partly open, she seems less a humanitarian doctor than an overeager actress without much common sense. Because of such absurdities, along with the general atmosphere of American noblesse oblige, skeptics will dismiss "Tears of the Sun" as an embarrassing crock—a contrived occasion for Americans to demonstrate their honor while fighting and killing a great many nasty Africans. In the baldest terms, this is true. But the movie is not quite ludicrous. For one thing, it has been made with ravishing skill. The cinematographer, Mauro Fiore, who also collaborated with Fuqua

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on "Training Day," worked in natural light, and he does wonders matching it shot to shot. Such technical feats are usually taken for granted, but they shouldn't be—key scenes are given over to periods of waiting and watching deep in the jungle, and Fiore's craftsmanship makes the experience a breathtaking suspension of time. Fuqua and Fiore subtly use minimal light to bring out the beauty of the faces—the handsomeness of the African actors (immigrants and refugees living in the United States) underlines the movie's lament over wounded African nobility. And Fuqua stages the big battle at the end almost as excitingly as Ridley Scott stages the battles in "Black Hawk Down," which set the recent standard for such work.

Bruce Willis is perhaps the only star who could anchor this sort of righteous war melodrama. When he broke into the movies, in 1987, after a couple of years in the TV series "Moonlighting," he seemed little more than a cocky lightweight with an uncontrollable smirk. But if you look back at the "Die Hard" movies you realize how enjoyable he was, how many touches of wit and play he injected into routine heroics. And after a while it became clear that Willis could be quiet and self-effacing when he wanted to be (as the Vietnam veteran in "In Country" and, later, as the aging prizefighter in "Pulp Fiction"). In "Tears of the Sun," Alex Lasker and Patrick Cirillo's script calls for the Lieutenant to be terse, even evasive—a kind of pop-culture Donald Rumsfeld. But Willis has that gleam in his eye, a little edge of awareness that doesn't require words, and he gets away with the strong-and-silent routines that would be laughable from another actor. At the movie's most ambitious moment, that extra awareness is meant to signal disgust. The Americans intervene in a village massacre, and are appalled by what they see. The over-all meaning of the movie is that Africa has dropped out of the American consciousness—that we are guilty of neglect in places like Rwanda, and that we must act to stop atrocities in the future. "Tears of the Sun" may be a flattering myth, but it's not a bad myth to be flattered by. And when future historians want to understand the lock-and-load moralism of the Bush Administration at the time of the second Gulf War, they will look to this simple-minded but rousing celebration of the American warrior as an inescapable guide.

Vince Vaughn, tall and handsome, with a widow's peak and a roving eye, is easily the most untrustworthy man to land in the movies since Bill Murray. Vaughn has played irresponsible egotists and vicious creeps, but he's best as a harmless hustler—most notably in the independent comedy "Swingers," in which Jon Favreau's garrulous script allowed him to exercise his talent for arrogant patter. Someone should pull together a major movie for this actor, because he's great at playing heels with a vagrant streak of decency—say, a lounge lizard with feelings, an uncomfortably adulterous husband. In the genial hit comedy "Old School," Vaughn plays a non-stop salesman, the kind of guy who could sell snake oil to a snake. The role isn't enough for him, but he's funny, and, intermittently, so is the movie.

"Old School," which was written (with various collaborators) and directed by Todd Phillips ("Road Trip"), and assembled under the benevolent auspices of the comedy veteran Ivan Reitman, is about a trio of thirtyish losers who turn their backs on adult responsibility: the earnest and baffled Mitch (Luke Wilson), who doesn't know that his girlfriend is active, on the side, in porno-style scenarios involving men in masks; the frighteningly hapless and uninhibited Frank (Will Ferrell), who has a tendency to take his clothes off at parties; and the flimflamming wise guy Beanie (Vaughn). Women have practically given up on these three, so they open a frat house at the edge of some distinguished seat of higher learning and sign up the unlikeliest students on campus, along with a ragtag group of shapeless older men who have nothing else to do. It's party time, and the movie is wild and crude without being mean—it's a comedy of infantile regression, "Animal House" for grownups. I wish, however, that Phillips had taken the premise further and made it darker: the frat-house idea is no more than a limp clothesline on which he hangs a variety of jokes that work and many nut-brain ideas that may have cracked someone up in a script conference. The humor is hit or miss, but each of the three men is funny in his own way. Will Ferrell, of "Saturday Night Live," has a roly-poly childishness that reaches full flower in a sequence devoted to college athletics in which he waves a long red ribbon in graceful circles and assumes a crouching pose of artistic Olympian virtue. Luke Wilson's steadiness holds the show together, and Vaughn mutters outrageous things out of the corner of his mouth. A feminist complaint: Phillips & Co. could have found something more amusing for the women to do. In general, they sit around waiting for the men to return to adulthood. The last time I looked, girls could be irresponsible, too. ♦

Bruce Willis plays Lieutenant A. K. Waters in a fable of American military virtue.

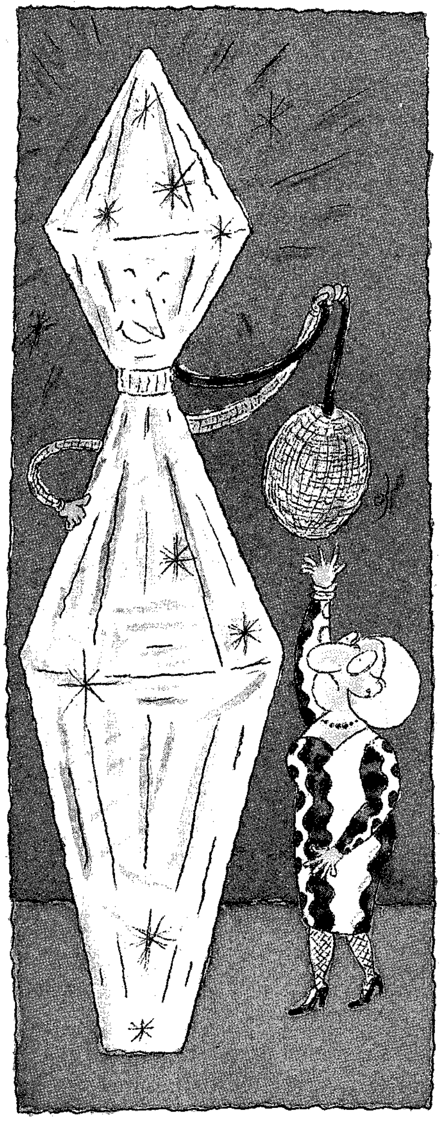
TOM BACHTELL

THE BACK PAGE BY PAUL RUDNICK

WHO'S THAT SMELL?

I was sick to death of just being Cynthia Pressman, a mousy and meticulous marketing analyst. I needed some man action, and I knew what I had to do. So last Monday morning, before trudging off to work, I splashed on Celine, the new signature fragrance from Celine Dion, created by Coty and sold at Sears and J. C. Penney. "I wanted it to be about feelings and memories," Celine declared, discussing her new scent in *People*, "so I told Coty it should smell like my mother's cooking, my husband, a warm fireplace, a new baby—you know, all the things that are important to me."

7:14 A.M. I board the subway, and immediately a craggy, good-looking fellow in a Burberry trenchcoat inhales deeply, ogling me. "You smell like Celine Dion's husband," he murmurs. "I like that in a woman." As I ease my way through the crowded car, an attaché case belonging to another handsome businessman starts visibly trembling. "Mmm . . . ," he moans, closing his eyes blissfully as I come near. "I feel like I'm *in* the Dion family kitchen, in Quebec. Is that Canadian Bacon No. 5?" "*Oui*," I reply, as a gleaming-eyed young broker rises to give me his seat. "Please sit down," he implores. "You smell so good, like a warm fireplace or a new baby. No, even better—you smell like a new baby *in* a warm fireplace."



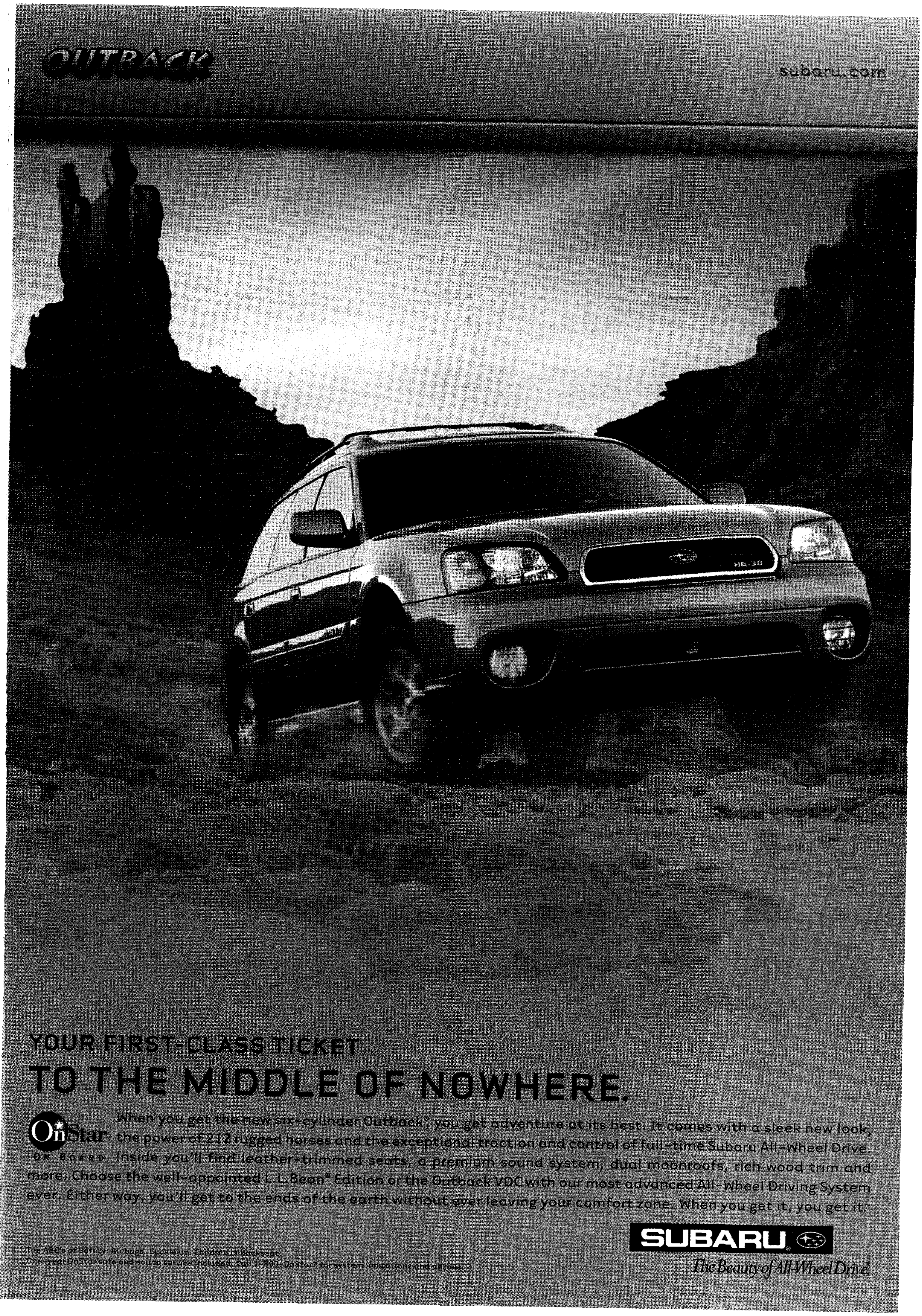
VICTORIA ROBERTS

7:47 A.M. As I reach my office building, the Celine is wearing off, so I reach into my Birkin bag and spritz myself with Glow, the spirited new eau de toilette from Jennifer Lopez. I squeeze into the elevator, and a dashing, silver-haired vice-president remarks appreciatively, "Whoa. Someone smells like a big sexy butt." I stare straight ahead as a rising junior executive pants in my ear, "Is that intoxicating blend of citrusy florals and subtle sandalwood top notes coming from your ass?" The doors open, and a charmingly scruffy bicycle messenger clutches at my elbow. "Please, baby, take me home with you, and tell me that the critics don't matter. Tell me that I'm still taller than Matt, and that 'Daredevil' really clicks with audiences."

9:42 A.M. I'm at my desk, in my soulless cubicle, and I'm lonely again, so lonely. I try to decide between a touch of Mary-Kate and Ashley One and Mary-Kate and Ashley Two, the sparklingly youthful new scents from TV's twin teen sensations, the adorable Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen. I daringly combine the elixirs, and Mark, the roguish jock in the adjoining cubicle, instantly thrusts his tousled head up over the half-wall, his nostrils quivering. "Hey, jailbait," he coos. "How about a three-way?" "Not till I'm old enough," I answer demurely. "All of my sensuality is being held for me in trust until I come of age." "I don't care," he insists, Hoovering my nubile aromas. "You smell like Michael Jackson in a toy store."

12:30 P.M. Heedlessly cocky, I breeze into the cafeteria in a drifting cloud of Guess, the perfume whose ad campaign once featured the impressively buxom Anna Nicole Smith. Male heads swivel with an audible *snap!* "Oh, mama," a smoldering guy at the salad bar groans. "Are you drunk?" Other patrons catch a whiff and then regard me with alarm. "She's gonna eat all the ribs," a secretary whimpers desperately, "and all the pudding!"

6:18 P.M. It's been a long, satisfying, voluptuous day, so as I leave the office I apply just a farewell dab of Elizabeth Taylor's White Diamonds. From out of nowhere, hordes of passionately aroused men are offering me their arms, enormous precious gems, and hip replacements. "You smell like Mike Todd," my doorman comments. "No—like Eddie Fisher. No, like Richard Burton. Wait . . . like some construction worker you met in rehab. Nope, it's Burton." As I reach my apartment door, I'm deliciously giddy from my Olympic marathon of masculine attention, and I risk a final drop of Lauren. "Hey, Cynthia," oozes Brad, the steaming hunk of brawny podiatrist who lives next door, as he gazes at me with a newly lustful awareness. "You wanna come over later?" he begs. "You smell like a rich Jewish guy." ♦



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